

DEADWOOD DICK IN A NEW GUISE!



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DEADWOOD DICK JR'S DOUBLET



OR,

THE TANDEM TEAM OF TEDDY'S TAILINGS.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING SURPRISING.

THE first to see it was Spli-nose Budge, and at sight of it he cried:

"Je-whipperty! What d'yer call that 'ar thing, anyhow?"

He pointed, and every eye followed his index.

There it was, in plain sight now, the most remarkable spectacle Teddy's Tailings had ever witnessed.

"Teddy's Tailings," an odd-enough name, surely, was a bright and breezy mining-camp of

AS THE WONDERFUL OBJECT ROLLED ON TO THE NEAREST POINT OPPOSITE THE CAMP, THE CLEAR NOTE OF A BUGLE RUNG OUT, WAKING THE ECHOES WITH ITS SILVERY SALUTE.

the Wild West, and took its name from its oldest inhabitant, one Teddy Terhune.

This Teddy Terhune, out on a prospecting round, dropped into the inviting gulch one day, to make the discovery that somebody had been there before him, though quite evidently a good while ago.

He found the remains of cradles and rockers, with some old crumbling sluice-boxes, while spread along down the bed of the little creek was a great quantity of "tailings," as the refuse from the washings is called. He had stumbled upon a deserted placer.

Examining the tailings, Teddy found some pieces of gold in the first handful he took up, and unslinging his pan, set to work with a will. He was delighted with the result, and pitching his tent right there, entered on the business of re-washing the refuse—a task that he could not accomplish in a lifetime, alone.

He had been there for some weeks, and had made quite a good thing out of it, when one day a party of half a dozen or so came along and discovered him.

At first he tried to make them believe there was nothing there, but all the evidence pointed the other way, so they, also, settled down to test the matter, and, like Teddy, continued right on.

And the tailings paid big returns on the labor invested.

It began to appear strange to these industrious toilers, finally, that such a quantity of gold should have escaped the eyes of the first washers.

This, naturally, led to investigation, when the truth was discovered that it was not all tailings, but that they had struck through into the original deposit, which was immensely rich.

They were profiting by a mistake the first workers of the diggings had made. Instead of beginning at the bottom of the pocket and working up the creek, the originals had set up their cradles near the upper end, probably because it happened to be there they found the first gold.

Anyhow, their "tailings" had covered all the rest of the bottom, and when the upper end of the gulch refused to yield any more pay-dirt, they had probably packed up and got out, little dreaming they were leaving behind them the very cream of the pudding, as it were. And so, in brief, had the camp come by its peculiar name, and there was no indication that it would ever have any other.

From that small beginning the camp had grown rapidly.

There was enough gold there to keep a goodly number of men busy for years to come.

Naturally, Teddy had protested, at first, claiming the find as all his own; but what was one voice against so many? He was simply laughed at.

But, finally, when it became evident to all that restrictions of some sort would have to be drawn to keep the bottom from being overrun, then Teddy's claim was admitted and all the diggers agreed to pay him a tax.

This suited Teddy immensely. The tax amounted to more, daily, than he had ever earned at the pan himself, and he gave up work immediately and settled down to enjoy his wealth. And it suited all the others, too, since it had been agreed that no new-comer could work in the diggings without first paying a fee of a hundred dollars.

And this hundred dollars, while but few could pay it, was occasionally passed over for the privilege of panning in the gulch pocket, and was at once divided among all the members of the unique company, though it seldom amounted to more than two dollars a man all around. The new-comer, too, received his share of it, becoming at once a partner in the combine.

On one or two occasions other miners had come into the pocket in force, to take the diggings by violence, but Teddy, taking time by the forelock as it were, had promptly marshaled his hosts and the invaders had been obliged to retire in ignominious defeat.

And so matters stood at the time of our story, regarding Teddy's Tailings and the little company who, with Teddy as leader, ruled its destinies as far as they were able.

There was besides, now, a regular mine at the top of the pocket, operated by machinery and working a vein with which Teddy Terhune had nothing to do.

This mine was called the "Ripe Pear," and at first had caused something of a sensation by the richness of its ore. Latterly, however, it had been dropping off, till now it was getting to be decidedly "lean."

The manager of the mine was one Bud Roeble, a man about thirty-five years of age, good-looking, dark complexioned, and with jetty

black hair and eyes. He was muscular, well made, and commanded respect more for his prowess than because he was liked. He was familiarly spoken of as "Buddy."

The camp itself was like most of its kind. It had its hotel, saloons and shanties, and its denizens were of the usual type. There were hard-working miners, the gamblers who preyed upon them, adventurers who were ever coming and going in quest of a fortune to be picked up easily, somehow or anyhow; and all the rest.

Teddy Terhune was mayor of the camp, as well as pretty much everything else in the official way from the chief of police to justice of the peace. He could arrest and consign to the "cooler" any unruly citizen who, having laid aboard too heavy a "jag" of "jig-water," was inclined to do lurid and promiscuous painting; or he would marry any pair who happened to require service in that line.

A peerless day was drawing to its close; the day's work was done, and the denizens of the camp were out upon the street in force.

In front of the Whip-poor-will Hotel and the Nightmare Saloon the crowd was greatest, for it was a stage day, and the old "hearse" was expected to come in sight at any moment.

On the other side of the gulch, high up, was a ledge trail, along which the stage had to pass before it could get down into the gulch, and all eyes sought that direction to catch sight of the stage when it came out at the point where it could first be seen.

And it was while they thus waited and watched that something rolled out into view on the ledge—a something that was not the stage, decidedly. In fact, no one was able to tell what it was at first.

One Split-nose Budge was the first to discover it, and he made the announcement in the words with which our story opens.

Every eye followed where he pointed, to behold the gay flushings of bright red garments and the glittering of polished wheels and rods of a strange vehicle.

And as they looked, and as the wonderful object rolled on to the nearest point opposite the camp, the clear note of a bugle rung out, wakening the echoes with its silvery salute.

"Et ar' a bein' from another world, that's what et ar," cried Split-nose in answer to his own question.

"Thar's two of 'em, then," averred Dawson Kredge, proprietor of the Nightmare Saloon.

This was true, as was now plainly seen, a full side view being had.

"Why, it's a tandem tricycle, as I'm born!" exclaimed Bud Roeble, whom the excited shout had brought to the door of the hotel.

"An' what ther doose ar' a tingum tricycle?" demanded Split-nose.

"There it is, to answer your question," said Roeble, pointing. "Mighty fine girl driving it, too, if I'm any judge."

A woman, or girl, in red, occupied the first seat, while behind her rode a man. The bugle was heard again, and it was seen that it was sounded by the man. At the same time the woman waved her hand.

"Come right erlong hyar!" yelled out Split-nose, taking off his hat and waving it in response. "Yer is a stunner, I allows, an' by ther je-whipperty we is all waitin' fer ye!" and he jumped up, waving both arms, and cracking his heels together, let out a yell that might have been heard a mile.

The bright vision sped on, the gay red and the flashing nickel making a fine effect, and in a few moments more was lost to sight behind a ledge that shut off the view for the time being.

It would be ten minutes or more before the tricycle could enter the pocket, and while they waited the curious crowd fell to wondering what manner of persons its passengers could be, offering speculations of every sort concerning them and their mission.

Said one man:

"What d'yer s'pose hev ever brought sech a prime beauty to sech a place as Teddy's Tailin's? I reckon she must hev got switched off onto ther wrong trail, an' hev come hyar by chance."

"Not a bit of et!" assumed Split-nose Budge. "She ar' comin' hyar ter see me, that's what's ther matter wi' Hanner! Mebby it's one of ther charmers what I left behind when I skipped from Salt Lake some years ago, when my fifth wife made it too hot fer me when I br'ught in the sixth!"

This Split-nose Budge was a character.

He was a bul'whacker, if that word ever aptly fitted any man and was always to be seen and heard. His name was understood to be John

Budge, but his nose having been split in some past scrimmage, gave to him the odd nickname he wore.

Budge had drifted into Teddy's Tailings along with the early settlers, was a member of Teddy's combine, and a fighter. He was feared, and generally did pretty much as he liked.

When he had a little "influence" aboard, and he most always did have more or less of the "double distilled" in his "b'iler," he was wont to talk about his experience, real or imaginary, as a Mormon. He claimed to have had six wives.

"Comin' ter see you," sneered Dawson Kredge. "Not much she ain't. She ain't one of yer deserted fairies, yer Mormon half-dozen, Split, no way ye kin make et out. She's as young an' bootiful an' fair ter look upon as a rose, ter jedge of her at long range. I don't reckon she fills ther bill, do she?"

"Waal, et makes no difference, anyhow," insisted Mr. Budge. "I tell ye she ar' comin' hyar ter see me, an' when she arrives I'll prove et to yer."

"An' how will yer go ter work ter prove et, we'd like ter know?"

"Why, I'll greet her wi' a kiss, ter be shore."

"Haw! haw! haw!"

"Do yer think I kain't do et? Do yer think I dassent do et? You jest wait till ther dainty roller gits around hyar, an' you'll see."

"You had better be careful what you try to do," a lamonished Bud Roeble.

"Why bad I better be keerful, Mister Roeble?" the bulwhacker demanded.

"Because, she may be a high-strung beauty, and might give you a lead pill if you attempted any such thing as that."

"That makes me larf, by ther je-whipperty et do!"

"Besides, there's a man with her, and he might take a fall out of you if you made yourself too familiar on short acquaintance."

"That makes me larf louder yet, et do," declared Mr. Budge. "Ez if ary man what's set up on two legs could take a fall out o' me—me, ther great howlin' hippertamus of ther woolly wilds! Haw! haw! haw! Why, et tickles me cl'ar down inter me boots; et do, fer a fack!"

CHAPTER II.

WILLING TO COMPROMISE.

WHEN Split-nose Budge made a foolish boast, he would foolishly stand by it, no matter what came of it. Perhaps that stubborn trait in his character had had something to do with his getting his nose so badly disfigured; no one could say as to that.

Having unwittingly declared that he would kiss the red rider of the tandem when she arrived, he had immediately assumed that the crowd was bantering him to do it, and nothing would turn him from his purpose.

And then, the idea of her being able to hinder him, or of the man being of any account in that way, was simply ridiculous, in his sight. The idea of her trying to shoot him, and worse—of the man's undertaking to do anything in the matter; why, he had good reason to laugh.

"You'd better not spoil the delightful sensation, then, by attempting anything rash," advised Ferd Wishby, the proprietor of the Whip-poor-will, in response to the last quoted declaration. "In the first place, the lady would certainly raise an objection; the man with her would undoubtedly take the matter up; and we should feel in duty bound to protect her. So, you see how it stands, and you had better taper off and draw yourself in a little."

"Je-whipperty whips!" screamed Split-nose, "ain't I past twenty-one? Ain't I of age yet? Wull, I should ruther sneeze ter opine that I am, or tharabouts, an' I reckon I am able ter take keer of Number One, you bet! Seems ter me this hyar is all in ther way o' banter that I dassent do et. Ef et ar', I'll show yer, that's all. I'll kiss her, fellers, or bu'st a button a tryin', an' yer hear me say so. Hooray! hyar she comes, by ther jumpin' je-whipperty! Jest ter see them 'ar purty feet o' hern fly, will yer! She's a daisy, you bet she ar'!"

The dainty tricycle had now entered the pocket, and was rapidly drawing near, and as Split-nose drew attention to it he took off his hat and waved it wildly.

Most of the crowd waited in silence, admiring the graceful figure of the lady in red as she advanced.

It took but a few moments to make the run, and when the tricycle drew up before the hotel and stopped, the lady saluted the crowd with a graceful wave of the hand.

She was both young and good-looking, and,

in her gay costume, was irresistibly charming. She had a bright, happy face, laughing eyes, a smile was on her lips, and she was a picture of robust health.

She was attired in jacket and short skirt of bright red trimmed with gold. On her head was a jaunty hat of red and gold color, with a clinging black plume, and gauntlets covered her hands. Her feet were incased in high buttoned shoes of patent-leather and kid, and a glimpse was had of black stockings above.

A glance at the man behind her told that he was simply her servant.

He was buttoned in a suit of bottle-green, the buttons of gilt, and was topped off with a silk hat something after the pattern of a coachman's, it having a wide band and buckle.

The man was neither old nor young, and his age might have been hard to guess. He had a smooth face, was rather good-looking, but, sitting with folded arms and with eyes set straight ahead, he looked like a statue. It was plain enough that he was only a "passenger."

Almost the moment the tricycle had stopped and the lady had saluted, forward sprung Split-nose Budge.

"How d'e do, Miss Beautiful?" he cried, extending his paw. "May I be jest everlastin'ly je-whippertied ef you ain't a stunner, jest as I told ther boyees when we fu'st spotted ye. How's all ther folks ter hum?"

"Folks are all well, I thank you, sir," was the smiling response. "All sent their best respects to you. It isn't necessary to inquire how you are; I can see for myself that you are blooming."

This in a light and airy, careless fashion, but the lady did not notice the outstretched paw of the bullwhacker.

"May I be most eternally je-whipperty-whipped!" cried the delighted Budge. "You is a hull team, you is, and driver yerself, with ther dorg under ther wagon and a jackass mounted behind. Say, kin et talk?" poking a finger at the buttoned servant.

"Oh, yes, when required," was the smiling answer. "But, sir, if you will give me time I will introduce myself to the people here, and—"

"Don't mention et yet, purty gal, don't mention et yet," interrupted the talkative Split-nose, making his facial expression perfectly hideous with a broad smile. "Let me have ther floor fu'st, ef yer please."

"Very well, say your say, then."

"Yer see, et ar' like this hyar: When you was cavortin' along on ther ledge trail up thar, ther lads hyar sort o' bantered me ter offer ye a kiss o' welcome when you aroved, an' as I'm a galoot what never takes no banter, I took 'em up prompt an' sassy."

"Yes?"

"Yes; you jest bet I did. Waal, now ther thing can be settled right hyar an' now, an' wi'out ther least trouble, ef you will hold right still an' not make ary a show of yerself. I'll plant a kiss on that ar' purty mouth o' yours in a way that will make ye think et's yer long-lost lovyer—pervised ye shut yer eyes while I'm doin' et."

"Indeed?"

"Sartain. Now, what do yer say? Ef ye won't make no fuss, et kin be settled in jest two seconds an' no harm done. If yer does make er fuss—Waal, I is goin' ter kiss ye anyhow, so yer kin do jest as yer please about et. I can't take no banter from ther boyees, so you must be kissed. Make ready that ar' purty mouth o' yours, now."

"Sir, you must be joking."

"In course I'm jokin'. Et ar' all a joke, purty one, but et's a joke what's in dead earnest, every time. I must have that ar' kiss, so don't hang back. Yer may live ter kiss a wuss feller, I allows, even ef I do say et meself."

"I may, but I doubt it. I certainly will never find a more homely one. I'll kiss you, however, on one condition."

The man in bottle-green and buttons still sat as still as though made of straw.

"Name et," cried Split-nose, "name et quick. I'm willin' ter meet ye half-way, every time the clock strikes."

"Very well; and you hear what he says, gentlemen. Come around on my centennial birthday, then, and I'll kiss you for all I'm worth. Is it a bargain?"

The crowd laughed heartily.

"Waal, hardly," the bullwhacker drawled. "That's lookin' too mighty fur off inter ther hence ter suit me. This kissin' aforesaid hev got ter be done hyar an' now, so I'll perceed ter begin. No squealin', now, or you'll spile et, sure."

All this had taken place in a few moments,

and no one else had had a chance to get in a word.

As he finished, Split-nose Budge advanced, but only to find himself brought up against the wicked tube of a business like revolver.

"I hate to go to extreme measures," spoke the little woman, mildly, "but I shall have to, if you persist. You had better go and take a walk, now, and think it all over."

"What did I tell you, Budge?" cried Ferd Wishby. "She will drill you, as sure as you live this minute."

"Of course she will," echoed Bud Roebel.

"You had better taper off, as Ferd told you."

"Let 'er shoot, ef she wants ter!" the bullwhacker cried. "I set out ter have that kiss, an' by ther je-whipperty I'm goin' ter have et, too!"

"I don't see how you are going to get it," coolly remarked the woman in red. "If you come any nearer I'll have to fix you for planting, much as I'd hate to spoil a good bullet!"

"Waal, dring dat yer pictur', anyhow!" cried the bullwhacker. "What do yer mean by sech impudence ter me? Et can't be thet ye knows who I am! I'm Split-nose Budge, ther king-pin of ther camp. I'm ther boss bruiser of ther burgh. Don't make me have ter scare ye, jest fer one leetle kiss, now!"

"Oh, no; I'll try not to get frightened very badly. You are wasting valuable time, however, for your simple request will not be complied with. Go away, now, like a good fellow, or I shall have to order my footman to throw you into the creek over there, and I would not like to do that. Water and you are evidently such strangers that the result might be harmful."

Now the crowd cheered and hooted, and Mr. Budge was getting wild.

"Throw me inter ther crick!" he cried. "Throw me inter ther crick! That 'ar thing thar do et?"

"Yes, sir, if you do not take yourself off immediately. I'm tired of fooling with you, and have no desire to kill you. The creek is the next best thing."

Mr. Budge saw that his kissing exploit was out of the question for the present, owing to the revolver and the fishing eyes back of it, and he was ready to get out in any way possible.

"Waugh!" he screamed. "Let him come an' try et on, that's all, Miss Pooty. Jest let him come an' try et on, only oncer, an' if be don't git jerked out o' them 'ar togs an' buttons, yer kin use me fer a foot-wipe, that's all. Let him come, I tells ye, an' you'll see fun!"

"It may not be funny for you."

"Not fun fer me! Bless ye, I'll jest relish et, you bet! Tell ye what I'll do, purty one."

"What is that?"

"You let that ar' buttoned thing o' yours git down hyar an' try ter put me inter ther crick, an' I'll say nothin' more 'bout ther kiss."

The man in green still sat like a statue, as though he neither saw nor heard anything that was said.

And the crowd—every man in it, was keenly alive to the fun of the moment. No one would interfere to stop this part of the programme, whatever they might have done regarding the kissing, had the lady needed help.

"It is a bargain, on one condition," the little lady spoke.

"What is ther condition?" demanded Budge. "Anything that's reasonable, an' I'm with yer."

"Reasonable enough, I assure you. It is this: You must promise that when you have got done with my footman you will let the matter drop for all time, and hold no grudge against him."

"Why, that's no confishun er tall, that ain't. In course I won't hold no grudge 'g'in' him! When I git done wi' him oncer I'll be done fer good an' all, you bet on that. I won't promise not ter muss him up some, howsumever. Waugh! Jest let him come."

"All right. Gentlemen, you have heard the agreement. Whatever comes of this, this fellow will have brought it upon himself. Jones," turning to the man in the green and buttons.

"Yes, m'lady," responded the statue, coming to life.

"Take this impudent fellow and throw him into the creek over there."

"Yes, m'lady," was the cool and matter-of-fact response again, and Jones proceeded to get down from his seat to carry out the order he had received.

Mr. Budge eyed him wonderingly, while the whole crowd looked on much amused, eager to see what would come of it. Certainly the little woman seemed to have wonderful confidence in her man Jones.

CHAPTER III.

MORE THAN HE BARGAINED FOR.

WHEN "His Buttons" got upon his feet, the crowd and Mr. Budge could get a better estimate of him.

He was a man of about medium height, and looked to be compactly put together, but appeared to be buttoned too tightly to be able to handle himself.

Those who were any judge at sight, noted two points, and these were—width of shoulder and massiveness of neck. These points spoke in favor of the stranger in green, and strongly.

"Wouff!" snorted Budge, in disgust, as he surveyed his antagonist. "Yer has taken a big contract this hyar time, Mister Buttons, sure's ye're bornd. I would back out, ef I was you, an' that's ther gospel truth of et. Miss, yer hed better call him off."

"I will do so, if you want to back out," responded the lady, with a smile.

"Back out—me? Wull, I ruther guess not! I was goin' ter say that ef yer didn't, I'd spile his clothes fer him."

"Oh, if that is all, don't stop a moment on that account. I am willing to assume all the risk of that, my good fellow. You were eager to have some fun, so don't let me spoil it."

"All right; ef that's it, why so be it. Buttons, is yer ready ter be baptized in ther latest approved style? If yer is, inter ther crick yer goes!"

Jones had said nothing, but had coolly pulled up his sleeves in a business-like way, and now stepped forward as though the evil eyes of the disfigured bullwhacker had no terrors for him.

He made a reach for Mr. Budge.

"Ho!" cried the bullwhacker, springing back, "yer means ter try et, does yer? Wull, et couldn't be expected that yer would flunk without makin' a try fer et, with ther purty eyes of yer missus on yer. Howsumever, I opine yer uncle will be ther one ter take ther lead in ther dance this hyar time. Look out, keep off, or I'll spile ther looks of one of yer eyes fer ye! By ther je-whipperties, what do you mean ter do, anyhow?"

Jones had followed him up, and had made another reach for his collar.

"Don't yer do that ergain," cried the bullwhacker, now getting angered, "or I'll have ter tap ye one on ther snoot, jest ter let yer know I'm around. Look out, I say, or by je-whipperty-whips I'll do et—Wull, take that, then, as a 'minder that I'm—

The footman in the buttons, following him up promptly, had made yet another grab at him, and now Mr. Budge aimed a blow at his face to keep him off.

He met with a surprise, however, for the face was not there when his fist arrived, and he was carried forward, to be brought up the next instant with a jerk by the back of his collar.

Cut short in what he had been going to say, he was not permitted to finish. The footman in buttons, having a grip on his collar, jerked him clear off his feet, flopped him over, took hold upon the "bosom" of his breeches with the other hand, and ran him toward the creek.

The crowd broke into one wild, loud whoop of approval, while the little lady in red looked on, smiling confidently.

"Good-by, Budge!" shouted some.

"Goin' ter take er bath?"

"Is yer tryin' ter walk Spanish?"

"Too many buttons fer you ter tackle, hey!"

Such cries with many more of similar import, assailed the ears of the unhappy Budge.

"Hold on!" he shouted. "Hold on, I say! This hyar ain't no fair tackle er tall, it ain't. I wasn't ready fer ye, I wasn't. Hold on!"

And the man was holding on, too.

"His Buttons" had his orders, and was obeying them.

Down toward the creek he ran the struggling bullwhacker, at a rapid pace, in spite of all his struggles.

And the nearer to the creek they came, the louder the bullwhacker bellowed to be set free. He claimed a foul, and wanted to have it a little more his way.

"Let up! Let up, I say!" he roared. "Ef yer don't, by ther je-whipperties ef I don't jest most everlastin'ly maul yer! I'll jam yer neck down inter yer stummick an' tie yer legs inter a knot! I'll make ye eat every blasted button ther is on yer duds! Hold on, or I'll—"

What other dreadful thing he was going to threaten was not made known, for at that moment they reached the creek, when the man in green and buttons lifted him with as little effort, apparently, as though he had been a man of straw, and gave him a fling that sent him flying out like a great bat.

Out he went, arms and legs all spread. Then there was a splash and the water was sent flying in every direction. And the bullwhacker—where was he? At first he was not to be discovered, but presently his back came up to view out of the shallow water.

The crowd was in an uproar of hilarity, and all sorts of things were being said for the benefit of Mr. Budge.

"That was the neatest thing I ever saw in my life, fair lady," declared Bud Roeble, to the lady in red.

"Oh, that was nothing," she responded laughingly. "I knew Jones was fully equal to the emergency, or I would not have ordered him to do it."

"He is a powerful fellow, I should say," remarked Ferd Wishby. "You certainly have a good protector in him, lady. A fellow is led almost to envy him the position he holds."

Both the mine-manager and the hotel-proprietor had stepped near the tricycle, and were speaking in their most agreeable mood.

Wishby was a younger man than Roeble, by five years, and fully as good-looking.

The lady smiled upon them both, in her arch way, as she responded:

"Oh, yes, Jones is fully able to protect me, when I need protection; for I am generally able to take care of myself. But, see, the trouble seems only to have just begun."

She pointed away to the creek, where Split-nose Budge was emerging from the water, puffing and snorting, and making all manner of dire threats against the man who had so humbled him in the eyes of his fellow-citizens.

"Yer is never goin' ter live ter do that 'ar trick ergain!" he screamed, between his puffs and snorts. "I'm goin' ter take out yer liver now, in spite of all yer buttons. Yer will be sorry that yer ever came to Teddy's Tailings, you bet yer will! Waugh—wouff!"

"His Buttons" stood calmly on the bank, as though he had no fears for the safety of his liver and other internal arrangements.

"Do you know what I'm goin' ter do to yer?" the bullwhacker bellowed, as he waded toward the shore. "I'm goin' ter jest most everlastin'ly je-whipperty-whiz ther very daylight out of yer! I'm goin' ter curl yer back hair till yer won't be able ter shet yer eyes! I'm goin' ter make ye look so sick that yer boss won't own ye!"

"Jones," the lady in red called out.

"Yes, m'lady," was the calm response.

"Protect yourself, Jones."

"Yes, m'lady."

"Hardly necessary for me to tell him to do that, you know," she said aside to those near her, "but he always looks for instructions from me."

"But, he has got a tough nut to crack, in Split-nose Budge," warned Bud Roeble. "If you say the word, lady, I will chip in and relieve him of the responsibility. I can do it."

"Yes, let us do that," urged Ferd Wishby. "Budge will be likely to get the best of it in a real fight."

"No, do not interfere," urged the lady, smiling confidently. "You will see that Jones can take care of himself. If he can't, it will be the first time. Do not interfere."

By that time it was almost too late, anyhow, for the bullwhacker was out of the water and making a run at his foe.

"I'll show yer now!" he roared. "I'm goin' ter pulverize ye, sonny, fer that 'ar mean trick what yer done when I wasn't ready. I'm goin' ter make mush of yer, right hyar in ther sand!"

But, he didn't do it that way. Undoubtedly he meant all he threatened, but he was counting without his host. The man in green and buttons had a vote in the matter.

In the town terror rushed, as he uttered his terrible threats, his arms flying wildly about, and his big fists beating the air with pile-driver force.

"But, "His Buttons" made no effort to get out of his way; rather, he awaited with reckless coolness, as it seemed.

On plunged the dripping bullwhacker, and when close up he let fly two powerful blows that, had they hit the footman, might have killed him on the spot.

But they didn't hit anything, for the blows were brushed aside with little or no effort, and the same thing happened again that had happened before.

The momentum of his rush and the force of his blows carried the bullwhacker forward, and before he was aware of it the man in green and buttons had him by the collar and rear, and he was swung clear of the ground and sent sprawling out into the water again.

At which the crowd literally roared with delight.

There was one wild cheer for "Buttons," with many a groan for the dethroned champion and terror.

And it had all been done with such ease and dexterity, as it seemed, that no one could realize just what had taken place. Was it science or luck?

When Split-nose Budge came out of the water this second time, or rather when he stuck his head out, he did not move with such haste, but paused to take a look at the man who had wrought him such evil.

"Et ar' no use, Budge," some one called out to him.

"Yer might ez well crawl out an' pollygize."

"I'll show yer!" the bullwhacker stormed. "I'll show yer what I'll do, by ther je-whipperity!"

He waded ashore deliberately this time, having evidently come to realize that he was no match for the man in green and buttons in a fisty way.

"His Buttons" awaited him as calmly as before, apparently ready for anything that might be next on the programme, judging by what he had already shown of his prowess.

Split-nose made no move until he had got well out of the water and was free to act unhindered, when, with a snarl, he made a grab at his belt and jerked forth his revolvers.

He meant business now, beyond any question.

CHAPTER IV.

FORCING AN APOLOGY.

THE mine-manager and the hotel-proprietor, hovering around the charming lady in red like moths around a light, both uttered exclamations of fear.

"Heavens!" gasped Roeble, "your man is dead, fair lady."

"Budge will kill him!" cried Wishby.

But the lady in red only smiled.

"I have no fear," she declared.

The same moment proved that her confidence was well placed, for a pair of flashing "tools" leaped into the hands of the man in green and buttons.

The bullwhacker was promptly covered, and was placed at a disadvantage where he had looked upon having everything his own way and of providing a funeral for the amusement of his townsmen.

"Put them right back again!" ordered the man in green and buttons, sternly. "If you don't, I'll shoot them out of your hands."

With a snarl of rage, the bullwhacker, seeing that everything was against him, thrust the revolvers back into his belt spitefully, favoring his foe with a look of anything but love.

"That is right," the always ready footman approved. "Do you think you have had enough, now?"

"I ain't had no fair show," the bullwhacker growled.

"And I don't mean to give you any fair show to kill me, either."

"I kin lick ye, an' I knows I kin, in a fair fight," Mr. Budge complained.

At which the crowd laughed. They had seen enough of this stranger to know that was impossible.

"You can't do it, Budge," cried Roeble. "You have met more than your match this time. This charming lady is well protected, you have found."

"And you hr'd better taper off now and draw yourself in," Wishby advised again. "If you don't we shall have to take a hand in it ourselves, and run you into the calaboose."

"I'll show ther cuss, ther fu'st chance I gits," the bullwhacker viciously threatened.

"Now, sir, that is going back on your word," spoke the lady in red, sweetly. "I appeal to the crowd if it isn't."

"That's what et ar'," assented Dawson Kredge. "Yer said yer wouldn't hold no grudge, Split, an' we must hold ye to et. Come, can't yer settle ther thing? We is dyin' ter know who this lady be."

"And I have been eager to tell you," assured the lady, sweetly. "It was too bad to suffer such a delay, and all for nothing. But, it will happen now and then. I am well protected, as you have seen, gentlemen. This fellow must apologize, and then I am ready to forgive him."

"Do yer hear that, Split?" cried Kredge. "Yer must sit down on yer marrows. Better do et gracefully an' save time an' trouble."

"You will see to it that he offers proper apology, Jones," the lady ordered.

"Yes, m'lady."

With that, the man in green and buttons, with

his weapons still bearing upon the unhappy Budge, ordered him to walk back to the tricycle.

"I'll be blamed if I will!" the bullwhacker shouted, defiantly.

"You'll be blowed if you don't, sir," was the grim assurance. "I'll blow your head off."

"What do yer mean ter make me do, anyhow?"

"You must go to m'lady, get down on your knees before her, and ask her pardon for your rudeness."

"No, darn me ef I will!"

"You will be worse than darned, if you don't. Then, when you have done that, you must apologize to me, too."

"Worse an' worse! What do yer think I am, anyhow? What do you take me fer? I don't own licked yet, let alone makin' a clean surrender in that way."

"Then you mean to break your word?" asked the lady.

"No more fooling," ordered "His Buttons."

"You just walk up there and do as I tell you.

If you don't you'll regret it."

With that, he advanced, till the cold and cruel-looking muzzles of the weapons almost touched the bullwhacker's temple.

"I have my orders, sir," he said, sternly. "You must apologize or I'll have to take satisfaction."

The proximity of the cold tubes, and something in the eyes of the man in green and buttons, caused the bullwhacker to change his mind.

"Wull, yer has got ther drop on a feller," he sullenly mumbled. "Say what I has got ter do. Ther wind don't blow every day from ther same corner though, yer don't want ter forget ter remember."

"I am not going to argue against that," retorted the footman. "All I have to do is to obey the orders of my lady. You will walk up there where she is, get down on one knee before her, and tell her you're sorry for your conduct. If you don't, your funeral will be announced."

Mumbling and grumbling, the water-soaked bullwhacker, to the tune of the laughter and jeers of the crowd, proceeded to obey.

Coming up near to the tricycle he got down on his knee, in mock earnestness, put up his hands, and said:

"Liddy, I'm mighty sorry under the circumstances that this hyar thing happened. Yer sees he hev ther drop on me. If yer don't want ter kiss me yer needn't. I won't 'sist on et."

"Then you didn't throw my footman into the creek?" asked the lady, in pretended surprise.

"No, hardly. Yer see, he didn't give me no chance. Et wasn't my fault."

"And you haven't mussed him up badly, either?"

"No fault o' mine."

"Well, under the circumstances I am inclined to forgive you. See that you do not cross me again. I may order Jones to serve you worse another time. Lady Peri is not always so lenient, I assure you."

"Lady Peri!" exclaimed Bud Roeble.

"A dashing name!" supplemented Ferd Wishby.

"I have been forced ter take water," growled the bullwhacker, as he got upon his feet again; and the crowd laughingly assured him that he certainly looked as if he had.

"Yas; I has been forced ter take water," he repeated, "but, that ain't ter say that I'm downed. No rooster in green an' brass is goin' ter come ter this hyer camp o' Teddy's Tailin's an' snatch ther laurel an' bay from ther classic brow of me, an' don't fergit that. Buttons, we'll meet ergain."

"We will have it out now, if m'lady is willing," proposed the footman.

"No, not jest now," refused Mr. Budge, moving off. "Some other time when I ain't so damp."

"Yander comes ther stage!" suddenly called out Teddy Terhune, who had been a quiet observer of all. "Yander comes ther old hearse!"

"Then I must hasten with what I would say to you, people of Teddy's Tailings, one and all," spoke the lady in red. "It might have been said long ago, but for that noisy fellow. I am known as Lady Peri. I am mistress of my own actions. I am taking a little excursion because it pleases me. My footman here is my protector as well as servant, and you have seen what he can do. Whatever I order him to do, that he does. If I remain a few days here in your wild camp, I hope I may have the friendship of all and the ill will of none."

Her footman had taken his place near her, with arms folded, and looked none the worse for his recent exertion.

The manager of the Ripe Pear took it upon himself to respond.

"We are proud of the honor you have shown our camp by coming here, Lady Peri, and will try to show ourselves in some slight degree worthy of the honor," he spoke. "I can assure you that you are welcome here, and can safely promise you that the citizens of Teddy's Tailings will stand by you in any emergency. Personally, if I can be of any service to you, you have but to command me. My name is Bud Roeble, and I am manager of the mine here. Welcome to our camp, Lady Peri! Men, a cheer!"

The cheer was given with a will.

"Allow me to indorse all that Mr. Roeble has said," spoke up Ferd Wishby. "I am proprietor of this hotel, Lady Peri, and its best room is at your service, free of charge. The obligation will be all on my side. It is seldom that a lady favors us with her presence, and one so fair as yourself has never been seen here before. Welcome! And now let me introduce to your notice Mr. Teddy Terhune, in whose honor this camp was named, and who holds the office of mayor. Mr. Terhune, Lady Peri, whose coming here ought to mark a red-letter day in our camp's history."

Teddy came to the front and put out his great, brown paw.

"Glad ter know yer," he said, in his best style, grabbing his hat clumsily in his other hand. "Yer is welcome hyar, 'sure ye."

The lady deigned to give him her hand, which caused Teddy to blush like a boy, giving him a thrill of pride he could not disguise. He felt the honor of his position, and was the lady's devoted slave from that moment.

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Terhune," Lady Peri spoke, as she pressed his big paw. "I am sure you and I shall be friends. Any favor you can do to make my stay here pleasant, will not be forgotten."

"Yer has only ter command me," Teddy stumbled out, "an'—"

"Oh, I am sure of it," the lady exclaimed, with a sweet smile upon the local sovereign. "There is only one thing I can ask, at present."

"Yer has only ter speak et right out, ma'm."

"I hope you will see to it that that fellow, that Mr. Budge, will not do harm to my foot-man in a treacherous way. I know he bears me no good will, and he may mean to avenge himself if he can."

"I'll take keer of him," the mayor declared, "ef I have ter lock him up in ther calaboose an' keep him there every blessed hour you is hyar."

"And we'll support you, too," cried Roeble, Wishby, Kredge and others.

"Thank you, gentlemen, thank you!" acknowledged the lady in red. "And now, with your permission, I will retire to the room promised me. You will allow Jones to put our tricycle in a safe place, please, and he will sleep before my door, as usual. Jones, your hand."

Her footman was ready at the word, and helped the lady to step down from the seat she had occupied.

Ferd Wishby, lifting his hat gallantly, led the way up the steps and into the hotel, while the man in green and buttons rolled the tricycle away to a place of safety for the present.

And it was then that the stage came bowling into the pocket, in the same direction from which the tricycle had come only a little while before.

The driver was flourishing and cracking his whip, his horses were coming in on a run, and with a wild shout he cut a half-moon on the space in front of the hotel and came to a stop.

"Whoop!" he cried. "Hyar we is, pilgrims an' tenderfeets. An' now I wants ter know, citerzens, ef yer kin tell me what sort of a baby kerridge et war that kem in hyar ahead of me! I've been wonderin' over et fer many a mile, seein' ther dainty cut et made, an' I see it hev come right hyar. What war et?"

All this before he had hardly stopped, and certainly before any of his passengers had time to alight. And for answer, as promptly as possible, the crowd told him the thing was a "tingum trixle," something the Jew Jehu evidently could not comprehend, for he scratched his head.

CHAPTER V.

TOO IMPORTANT A PERSONAGE.

"I GIVE et up," he decided. "I guess I don't know what et ar'. I thort mebby et was ther angel o' death with an advance coffin."

It was the crowd's turn to stare, then, for neither could they comprehend what the driver

was getting at by such an allusion as that. But it was explained demonstratively in the same moment.

The door of the stage opened, and a very death's-head looked out upon the astonished assemblage.

At any rate that was what they took it to be at first sight, for it was a face that was but the barest skin and bones, and as yellow as a jaundiced corpse.

Seeing the crowd stare, the driver glanced down, and grinned, and jerked his thumb toward the wonderfully thin personage.

"Funeral day after ter-morrer," he heartlessly joked.

The death figure was getting slowly out, and those around imagined they could hear his bones rattle as he moved.

When fully out, he stood up and looked around him, his hollow eyes gleaming with the wasting fire of disease, and as he looked he gave a cough that was like the hollow sound of a big drum.

The next passenger to follow, immediately after, was a robust personage of full color and vigor, a wonderful contrast.

Following him immediately, was a young lady of beauty and evident high spirit.

These two started toward the hotel at once, leaving the hollow-eyed man of bones still looking around inquiringly.

"I fail to see one," he presently sighed, in hollow tone.

"What ar' ye lookin' fer, anyhow?" inquired Mayor Terhune, with somewhat of curiosity.

"I was looking for an undertaker's sign," was the solemn response.

"Yer will look in vain, hyar," the mayor declared. "We don't have no sech in this camp."

"Too bad, too bad. I don't like the idea of being buried without a coffin, but if I must I suppose I must."

He gave another hair-raising cough.

"But, yer ain't dead yet," reminded the worthy mayor.

"I'm just as good as dead," was the doleful response. "Both lungs gone, and a hole in my liver that you could put your fist into."

Several hollow barks followed this statement, as though to attest the truth of it.

"Yer is in a bad way, then, I allow," said the sympathetic Teddy.

"Yes, truly. I'll never be worse till I'm better, that's sure. I'm at my worst now. But, you have a gravedigger, surely? Don't rob me of that one hope, I beg of you."

"Oh, yes, 'most any of the boyees kin perform that service, stranger."

"I am glad to hear it. It's bad enough to look the prospect in the face that no coffin is to be had, but it's worse to think of one's bones bleaching in the sun. I have no dread of anything else."

The driver was grinning from ear to ear, some in the crowd essayed a sickly smile, but most of them were shocked.

That a man evidently so near the end could speak so slightly of it all, was something new to them.

But, then, he seemed to be only too terribly in earnest after all.

"Does my apparent levity shock you?" the skeleton asked. "Let me assure you, then, that I am deadly in earnest."

He smiled at his grim humor, his skinny cheeks rolling away in wrinkles and disclosing his jaws.

"Who mought you be, stranger?" inquired Dawson Kredge.

"Well may you ask," was the hollow answer. "To-morrow it might be too late. Man is only a shadow at most. If I were any less I wouldn't be here. I am known as Consumptive Chet, the Cadaver from Yonder."

It was a name that caused a shiver to run down the back of the public generally, taken together with the dread aspect of the man before them. And the adjunct in no wise lessened it.

"You needn't look so glum about it," the Cadaver remarked, looking around in his hungry way. "It is no funeral of yours, is it?"

"Stranger, yer is enough ter shock a stone image, yer is!" declared Teddy.

"Ha! ha!" was the hollow laugh. "What is the use of mourning over what can't be helped! I've got consumption, and I know it—so does everybody else, for that matter. What will it help me to go moping around as though in premature mourning for myself? Nixey! I mean to be cheery as long as I can wiggle a toe, and don't you forget it."

And then he coughed in a way that threatened to tear his bony structure all asunder.

By this time the other passengers had alighted and the driver was ready to go around to the stables.

"He's a character, hear'!" he declared. "If thar ain't a second class funeral hyar afore the week is out, I miss my guess. Gee-up, thar!"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if you are right, my friend," the Cadaver admitted. "Well, all I ask is a decent burial, and I sha'n't kick. But, come; who will take something?"

And, with a commingled laugh and cough, in hollow mockery, the Cadaver made his way toward the saloon, the crowd nothing loth to accept his invitation.

Meanwhile, the other passengers mentioned had gone into the hotel, as said, and the man had entered the bar-room to register.

Stepping to the bar, he demanded in a rather imperious way:

"See here, I want the best room you have in your house."

"Sorry, but you can't have it," answered Wishby's clerk.

"What! What is that you tell me, sir?"

"Sorry, but the best room has just been engaged. You can have the next, however."

"I want the best or none, young man, understand that. I do not travel second-class, I'd have you to know. Who has got the best room? I'll buy him off."

"It has just been given to Lady Peri, the lady sport who came in on a tricycle just ahead of the stage. I don't think you can buy her claim, so you had better take what you can get."

"Where is this woman? I'll see her. I have my daughter with me, and she must have the best that's to be had. Do you understand me? We are from New York City, young man, and we want the best, and are able to pay for it. Where is this creature you speak of?"

"The lady, sir, is in the sitting-room, I believe, where she is talking with the proprietor, Mr. Wishby, and Mr. Roeble, the mine-manager, who are stuck on her—as I'll tell you confidentially. This man here is her footman. I've no doubt he will inform her of what you want, if you speak to him."

The man in green and buttons, having stored the tricycle away in a corner of the bar-room, was waiting to get a chance at the Register.

The man from New York turned and favored him with a stare.

"His Buttons" returned the stare coolly.

"Where is your mistress?" the New Yorker demanded.

"In the parlor, sir," was the respectful answer.

"Humph! a grand parlor, here! I want to see her. I want the room she has engaged."

"I don't think you can get it, sir," the footman declared. "You might step in and see her, if you want to, but I don't think it's any use."

"Confound you for your importance! Go in and ask her what she'll take for her right to it. Tell her a gentleman from New York is here with his daughter, and is bound to have the best in the house."

"Yes, sir."

The man in green and buttons inclined his head, and went from the room.

In a few moments he returned, and the New Yorker stopped in his pacing up and down and demanded:

"Well?"

"She says you can't have it, sir."

"Can't have it! It is only a matter of dollars. Tell her I'll give her a cool hundred for it."

"It won't be of any use," the footman assured. "A thousand wouldn't buy it. When m'lady says a thing, she means it. You can't have the room."

"Get out of the way, and I'll see her myself. I know all about such persons, I fancy. I think a hundred will give me the room fast enough. I'll step in and see her myself."

He hustled out of the room, and into the sitting-room.

Here was his daughter, in an easy-chair at the rear of the room, while by a front window sat the lady in red, with Roeble and Wishby still forcing their attentions upon her.

"Ahem!" prefaced the New Yorker, on entering. "Are you the—the person who has engaged the best room in the house?"

"I am the person, sir," was the cool response, and the lady's bright eyes met those of the pompous Gothamite fearlessly.

"Well, I want it, want it for my daughter," the man explained bluntly. "I am willing to pay your price for it, for I am bound to have it. What will you cede it to me for?"

"You can't have it at any price."

"Nonsense! I'll give you a hundred dollars for it."

"Money is no object to me, sir. A thousand would not buy it, though a simple, respectful request might have gained your object for you. Is this young lady your daughter, sir?"

"I'm sure we don't care so much about the room, papa," the young lady spoke up.

"But we do, though!" the man stormed. "When I want a thing I want it, that's all, and I'm willing to pay for it. Yes, she's my daughter, madam."

"Well, I am willing to compromise the matter for her sake."

"What do you mean by that? How compromise?"

"I will permit her to share the room with me, as I am alone, and we can be company for each other."

"Wh-what!" the robust New Yorker exploded. "Dare you propose such a thing to me? I do not know you, madam, and I do not—"

"I am sure she is a lady, papa," the daughter here interrupted. "I am sure her offer is kindly meant."

"You will probably know me better," the lady in red calmly returned. "Your daughter is right in saying that my motive was kindly meant. However, you had better secure the choice of rooms that remain, sir."

"And you will find it a good one, sir," spoke up Wishby. "In fact, it is just as large as this lady's, except one window. You will find it all right. You certainly cannot expect this lady to surrender any rights to you."

Grumbling something to himself, the man left the room, and as soon as he had gone his daughter made apology for his rudeness to the lady in red. She had evidently seen enough of her to be assured that she was a lady.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHEERFUL CADAVER.

THE man re-entered the bar-room still mumble, and strode to the bar and laid hold upon the register.

The man in green and buttons had just shoved it back, after registering for his mistress and himself, as was evidently a part of his duties.

"Humph!" sneered the important man from New York, as he glanced at the latest entry, "a woman without a name, eh? An adventuress, no doubt. Lady Peri—that's a good one."

"Will you permit me to call your attention to one thing, sir?" asked the man in green and buttons.

"Call attention to what you please," was the gruff response.

"Well, I will call attention to the fact that m'lady is a lady. As her footman, I will not bear her name sneered at. If she chooses to travel incog., that is her own business."

"Oh-ho! Then you take that upon yourself, do you? And what if I do not choose to heed you?"

"Then, sir, I shall tweak your nose for you, that's all. My instructions are to permit no slighting remarks to go unchallenged in my hearing."

"You'd tweak my nose—you? Ha! ha! ha! That's pretty good, that is. Why, you flunky, I'd wear my cane out across your back if you tried such a thing on with me."

"I trust you'll not have occasion to do it, sir."

It was said with cool politeness and civility, and the man in green and buttons backed from the room with a formal bow.

"Dast his impudence, anyhow!" cried the exasperated gentleman from New York. "I have a notion to go after him and pull his ear for him. I would do it, too, if it wouldn't be lowering my dignity."

"It might be the means of lowering something else, too," said the combined clerk and bartender, insinuatingly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Will you allow me to give you a pointer?"

"Yes; fire ahead."

"Well, that fellow in green is a terror when you wake him up. He hadn't been here two minutes before he threw the boss brawler of this camp into the creek. And when he came out he pitched him in again."

"What care I for that? What did he do it for?"

"Because the man offered insult to the lady in red. I thought I'd tell you and put you on your guard."

"Humph! Well, I am no fighter, but I'd like to see him tweak my nose as he threatened to do, that's all. I'd show him—by gad I would!"

With that the man took up the pen savagely, and proceeded to make an entry under the one last recorded.

The names he put down were these:

HARRISON WALSINGHAM, New York City.

VERENIA WALSINGHAM, New York City.

"There," he said, "give my daughter the best room you can, and I'll take anything that's left. Give me one adjoining, if possible."

This arrangement was soon adjusted, and Mr. Walsingham began to cool off from his heated irritability.

Supper was soon announced, and the hungry passengers sought the dining-room.

Bud Roeble and Fred Wishby entered the bar-room.

"By Jove! but she is a charmer!" Bud Wishby exclaimed.

They had just parted from Lady Peri.

"I agree with you," was the response. "But, how about the other one?"

"A darling. I tell you what it is, I guess we shall not have to fight over the Peri."

"How so?"

"I'm stuck on the beauty of the other one."

"That's a good thing. I was afraid I should have to challenge you and kill you off, in order to have the field to myself."

"Ha-ha! Well, I had some such designs toward you, but now it is all unnecessary. I will leave Lady Peri to you, if you will leave the other little beauty to me."

"It's a bargain."

"That settles it. Let's see what her name is, if it's down."

With that Wishby stepped to the Register and pulled it around to read the new names on it.

"Thunder!" he ejaculated.

"What is it?" demanded Roeble, also looking.

"The name is Walsingham!"

"Blazes!"

The two read the names, and then looked at each other.

"And from New York, too," remarked Roeble.

"There can be no mistake about it, I guess."

"No, I think not. In fact, it's improbable. This is the man, and he is here for the purpose Riggins mentioned to you."

"There's no doubt about it. He'll be after me, when he has filled his locker, be sure of that. Well, I fancy I am about the right person to tackle him."

"Yes, you will do. But, there is his daughter with him. We may be able to come to a nice little understanding all around. I tell you I am more than half in love with the girl already."

"Go in, old fellow. May you win the prize. If you do, I sha'n't envy you your daddy-in-law, that is a sure thing."

"Ha! ha! ha! No, I should think not. Let's step over to the Nightmare and talk it over a little."

"Come on, and I'll steady my nerves for a set-to with old Walsingham."

The pair passed out of the bar-room and entered the saloon.

There they found a big crowd, with the Cadaver the object of attraction. The treat was over, and Consumptive Chet was reciting Gray's Elegy for the edification and amusement of the crowd.

"Heavens! what have we here?" gasped Wishby.

"Death, without the pale horse," responded Roeble.

"Isn't he a horror!"

"Rather."

The Cadaver noted them, but made no pause in his recital. His tone was deep and hollow, and as sepulchral as a voice from the tomb may be imagined to be.

These two leading spirits of the town pressed well forward, and listened to the concluding verses of the doleful poem, and when the Cadaver stopped he broke into his awful grave-yard cough.

Not a sound of applause was to be heard.

The effect had been most depressing.

"Strange that I can't make you smile, not once," the Cadaver observed, as he looked over the crowd. "Anybody would take this for a funeral assemblage."

"I opine et ar' ther next thing to et," declared Teddy Terhune.

"I believe you are right," the Cadaver admitted. "I hope you will be more cheerful at my planting, though."

"What would yer consider ther proper caper?" asked Split-nose Budge.

He had made a change of clothes, and was around again as good as new, with perhaps some improvement.

"What would I consider fitting for such a cheerful occasion?" the Cadaver repeated.

"Let me see: If you had a brass band, or something of that sort, and would escort me to my hole to the tune of Sally Come Up, or some such stirring air as that, I am sure I would appreciate it. And then when you had done the proper thing by me, that is to say, when you had planted me in good shape, I would suggest a dance, with plenty of free lunch to brace you up."

"You must carry an insurance on your life, that makes you so jolly," suggested Bud Roeble.

"No; I only wish I did," was the response.

"In the midst of life we are in death, you know, and what's the use of making a long face over what can't be helped? No; I am not insured. I applied too late. I had only one lung left when I made my application, and a piece of that was gone, and they told me I hadn't much liver to speak of. You see, it was a liver they wanted. Wish I were insured for ten thousand or so, it would make some poor devil happy when I'm gone. But, what's the use of repining? I'm not going to kick, you bet."

And then he coughed his awful cough again.

"You seem to take it cool, and that's the fact."

"And why not? If I didn't joke about it, somebody else would. I remember one camp where I put up some time ago, before I'd got as bad as I am now. I was looking for work. I inquired if there was an opening anywhere for a young man, and they told me no; saying they generally made them to order, two by six. I shook the dust of that camp off my feet in haste. I wouldn't die there to please 'em."

The Cadaver smiled his horrible smile, and coughed again.

"By the way," he observed the next moment, "what is the difference between a cough and a coffin?"

"Not a mighty sight, in your case, I opine," said one man.

"I am afraid you're mistaken, in my case," was the response. "There isn't a coffin to be had here, I am told, and yet here I expect to die. I know I can't hold on many days."

"Well, then, what is ther answer?" asked Teddy Terhune.

"The difference between a cough and a coffin is a yard, sir."

"A yard?"

"Yes; a graveyard."

Another fit of coughing.

"And still I can't make you smile, eh?" the Cadaver presently observed. "I guess there's no use in trying any longer. But, I can't see why I should cast such a gloom over you. I'm as good as dead and buried, I know, but my death is no more certain than yours, every man of you. It's only a question of time. There, since I can't make you smile, think over that, and—get insured."

A harder fit of coughing than usual, and the poor mortal sat down on a chair and rested by a table.

"That fellow's in for it, and no mistake," remarked Roeble to his companion, as they found seats. "He's only hanging on to save funeral expenses, I guess. But, our interest is with the living, at present."

"Yes; you're right. What are we going to do about this affair, if Walsingham gets too inquisitive?"

"Let him be as inquisitive as he likes. I'll attend to his case. What you want to do is to take care of the daughter."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Make her fall in love with you."

"Pshaw. Do you think I could do that?"

"Why not? You are just the sort of fellow."

"But, she may have a flame at home, don't you see?"

"What if she has? It is your business to oust him and jump it. With that Apollo face and form of yours, it ought to be easy. I only wish my prospect was half as good with Lady Peri. But, never say die, you know."

CHAPTER VII.

DOUBLY WARNED.

THE two men talked for a considerable time. And their talk, whatever it was, became one full of interest to them both.

When, finally, they arose, it was to clasp hands as though some compact were thus sealed and made binding.

The Cadaver had gone out while they talked, and had stepped into the hotel to find supper and lodging, things he was hardly yet prepared to forego.

"I am far gone, I know," he said to the sympathizing clerk, "but I have to eat and sleep,

the little I can. Sleep is the one balm of my existence." And then he proceeded to quote:

"Some day I'll take a berth
In about six feet of earth,
And I'll sleep for all I'm worth—
Under ground."

"You make light of a grave subject," remarked the clerk, as though his pun were original.

"Yes; and your people will soon have a chance to make grave of a light subject—even myself," was the response. "But are the others through supper yet?"

"I guess they are, or nearly so. Why?"

"I don't like to crowd myself in, you see. I generally take away the appetite of the others. But, if you think they're near done, I'll go in."

"I think they are."

After stopping to cough, the Cadaver sought the dining-room.

He had registered, but with the name he had before given in response to inquiry—Consumptive Chet, the Cadaver from Yonder.

When he entered the dining-room, the Cadaver found Mr. Walsingham and his daughter still at the table. The daughter was through, and her father was about finishing.

"Don't let my ghostly coming interfere with your eating," the Cadaver spoke.

"We are about done," responded Mr. Walsingham. "I see you are after some of the substantial yet."

"Yes; I eat to be in style, that is about all. Well, have you found the man you told me you have come here to see, Mr. Walsingham?"

"I have not looked for him yet, but I believe I have seen him. I believe I ran across him in the sitting-room a little while ago. He was talking to that gay lady in red. Have you seen her?"

"No; who is she?"

"A woman who came here on a tricycle, with a footman in livery, only just a short time ahead of the stage."

"Oh, yes; the driver was asking questions about that vehicle, and it gave him a good deal of worry all the way, wondering what it was. What manner of woman is she?"

"She is a lady, sir," spoke up the daughter.

"I call her simply a woman," said Mr. Walsingham. "She is a gay creature, good-looking I admit, but a good deal of a sport."

"Perhaps I shall get a chance to see her, after supper. But, I was going to say that I have seen your man, Mr. Walsingham."

"You mean Mr. Roeble?"

"Exactly."

"Where did you see him?"

"In the saloon—the Nightmare they call it."

"A fitting name, no doubt. But, how could you know the man?"

"Why, I heard his name mentioned. There was another with him, one Wishby, I believe."

"Yes; he is proprietor of this house."

"Well, I would say a word to you in private, Mr. Walsingham."

This was said in a low tone, and ended in a fit of coughing that made the room echo.

"What is it?" was asked.

"They are a pair of fellows who will bear watching."

"What do you mean by that? Honest men will bear a good deal of watching."

"I will put it plainer, then. I mean to say that they are a brace of fellows whom it will be well for you to look out for."

This was said with much earnestness.

Mr. Walsingham looked at the living skeleton inquiringly.

"I don't yet understand what you are getting at," he declared. "How can you know anything about them?"

"Well, I can't make it any plainer for you, sir," the Cadaver made answer, "for I don't know anything positively upon which to base my warning. It is only in a general way."

"Then why do you mention it at all?"

"Because I know you are from far East, and what we call a tenderfoot."

"Then you think I'm not able to take care of myself, eh? I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure."

"There, there, no need to comment on it in that way. You have been warned, and if you allow yourself to be imposed upon, it's your fault."

"Yes; it will be, rest assured of that. When they can impose upon Harrison Walsingham, they'll be older men than they are to-day. I have cut my eye-teeth, sir, clear through."

"I am pleased to hear you say so, for you will need them, to carry you through here on a level keel. You haven't a cordon of police around you out here in the wilds, and your daughter

needs your care more than ever. So, just take the advice of one who has been there, but who isn't very likely to get there any more, and be wary."

This was said so earnestly that it made its impression.

It ended with another fit of coughing, and by the time the poor consumptive had come out of it the New Yorker and his daughter had left the room.

"What do you suppose he meant, papa?" asked the young lady, when father and daughter had gone up to their rooms.

"I do not know, Verenia," was the sober answer.

"He has really alarmed me."

"Nonsense! You must think nothing of what he said, my child."

"But, how can I help it? He seemed to speak as though there is danger here for you and me."

"Merely his diseased mind. He cannot be expected to be perfectly sound, with death staring him in the face as it does. His imagination is too vivid."

"But, you will be careful, won't you, papa?" the girl asked earnestly. "What would I do, were anything to happen to you?"

"There, there, now, you must brighten up. Nothing is going to happen to me. We are not in an outlaw camp, child. Law and order rule here, the same as at home, and we are safe."

"I am not so sure. He spoke about our not having police protection here. I am sure he meant something."

"Confound him! I wish he had kept his impressions to himself."

"Then you do think there is some cause—"

"Not a bit of it! We are as safe as though we were at home. Let any one try to harm us, and I will teach him that we are able to take care of ourselves."

"Do you know, papa, that—"

"What would you say?"

"I am half-sorry you did not let me share the room of Lady Peri."

"Pshaw! She is no company for you. What do you know about her? Her very appearance is against her. No, you are better off alone than with her. Your door shall be well secured when it is time to retire, and I will leave the one between our rooms ajar."

"I am sure there is nothing bad about the lady, papa. I know I could not be mistaken. Her face is pure and good. But let us not discuss it; I am willing to let it be as you say, for I know you have my best good at heart."

She reached up, caught her father's face between her hands, drew his head down and kissed him, and after a few further remarks they parted for the time.

"I do not know what this feeling is that has come over me," the young lady said to herself, when alone. "I feel that there is danger here for us. What it is I cannot imagine. I must watch over papa all I can."

She sat down and was thoughtful.

"He warned papa against Mr. Roeble," she mused, "the very person he came here to see. What can it mean, I wonder? And then, this Mr. Wishby, the proprietor of the house, who seems so gentlemanly. I cannot understand it. Perhaps his mind is not very sound, as papa said."

While she thus mused, there came a light tap at the door.

It was not dark yet, and she opened the door without any hesitation or thought of danger.

What was her surprise to find there the lady in red, Lady Peri.

The moment the door was opened, the woman in red, putting her finger to her lips as a signal of silence, stepped in.

Verenia Walsingham looked at her with something of surprise, as she coolly closed the door, silently, and helped herself to a seat, motioning Verenia to another.

"Pardon my manner," she then spoke. "I have come to have just a word with you in private."

"I am afraid papa would not like to find you here," said Verenia.

"I thank you for your frankness," returned the lady in red. "But your papa has stepped down to the bar-room, and is not likely to return for some minutes at least."

"And what is it you would say?"

"I want to warn you."

"Another warning!"

"You exclaim as though you have already been warned."

"And I have, or rather papa has."

"Indeed. Do you mind telling me by whom?"

"By that poor consumptive who came in the stage with us."

"Of what did he warn you?"

"I am not sure that I ought to tell you."

"No matter; I will tell you what I have come to say. I believe your father is interested in the Ripe Pear Mine!"

"He is."

"And he has come here to inquire into it, being a heavy stockholder in the concern."

"How did you know that?"

"No matter, since I do know it. But, then, your father has as good as told his business already. Now, his investigation is likely to lead him into danger."

"I knew it!"

"You say you knew it?"

"I have felt sure there was danger of some kind in it."

"Well, it is of that I would speak warning to you, though I do not want it to be known that I have spoken to you about it. Can you keep that secret, even from your father?"

"Oh, yes; and I feel sure you are to be trusted. I like you, even if papa is rather against you."

"Thank you. Well, the warning I would give you is this: Be very watchful of the manager of the mine, Bud Roeble. He might mean harm to you. And, you can, in your own way, tell your father that you distrust him. You need not say that I have warned you. Do you understand me?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A STREAK OF GOOD LUCK.

THE girl looked at Lady Peri as though trying hard to understand.

"I do not know whether I do or not," she responded. "Why should we distrust Mr. Roeble?"

"So that you may be on your guard against him, that is all," Lady Peri made answer. "I am not prepared to tell you more now."

"But he is manager of the mine, and the very person papa has come here to see. It seems strange that he is to be suspected of meaning us any harm. I wish you would tell me more."

"Perhaps I will, shortly. Now, may I ask you a question?"

"Yes; as many as you please."

"Who was it warned you before? But, you did tell me that. I meant to ask of what he warned you."

"It was the consumptive, as I said, and his warning was about the same as this you have given me. But, he included Mr. Wishby with Mr. Roeble."

Lady Peri was interested, and showed it.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed. "I would not have thought it. But, why not? There, I am speaking my thoughts aloud, I find. I will now go. If you want a friend, do not hesitate to call on me."

"I feel that I may do so."

"You will not be disappointed, I assure you. More, I will instruct my footman to watch over you all he can, and you may trust him as you would me. He is well able to protect you if occasion requires it, and will do so, too. Command him any way you will."

With that, the lady in red was quickly gone, before Verenia could shower upon her the questions that were at her tongue's end.

"I am more mystified than ever," the girl mused. "What in the world does it all mean? But, it is plain enough that we must look out for Mr. Roeble; and yet, who could suspect him of wrong? I am puzzled, greatly."

Mr. Walsingham returned to his room within the hour, and both he and his daughter retired early.

The evening's excitement in the Nightmare Saloon had then no more than fairly begun.

This saloon was one of the usual sort, as such places go. It was a roomy place, with bar near the front, and with tables around. At the rear was the gambling corner.

Here was a long table, at the center of which was a faro lay-out.

At each end were other games whose percentage was about as favorable for the bank as the faro.

The faro game had just opened, and the dealer was a woman clad in rather fancy costume, but with beauty rather far along on the wane.

"Make your play," her voice was heard; "make your play, gentlemen."

There was quite a group near the table, and some of these began to play at once, as if seeking satisfaction for a previous occasion.

Among these was Mr. Split-nose Budge, who, by the way, had more than his gambling defeats to seek satisfaction for. He had quite a

lot of chips, and went in liberally on the queen.

"You begin heavy, Mr. Budge," remarked the dealer, with a smile.

"Yas, Faro Fan," was the response, "an' I mean ter stop heavy, too, if et ar' in me."

"Well, I hope you will, that's all. Your luck has been running against you long enough. Only don't break the bank, please."

This brought a laugh.

It was not very likely that Split-nose would do that.

The plays laid, the dealer began to draw the cards, and the business of the evening began in earnest.

This was the principal resort of an evening, at the camp, and usually had a big crowd till a late hour.

The business of the night was in full blast, when who should enter but Lady Peri, with her footman at her heels.

A murmur of excitement immediately ran round, and all eyes were soon focused upon the dashing lady in red and her attendant in green.

Lady Peri looked around with cool carelessness, and soon had drawn a person to her side. This was Bud Roeble, who, stepping forward, made her a profound bow.

"This is an agreeable surprise," he had to say.

"I thought I would look in upon your camp's evening amusements, Mr. Roeble," was the sweet response.

"And you are welcome, too. Here, Kredge, bring an easy-chair for Lady Peri, and place it wherever she will have it. Her presence does your den an honor you ought to appreciate."

Dawson Kredge was already bringing the required article.

"Do not go to any such trouble," the lady protested. "I can make out for myself well enough."

"We couldn't think of et, ma'm," spoke Kredge. "We couldn't fergive ourselves ef we did. Whar will yer have et, ma'm?"

"Oh, anywhere. You may place it near the table there, and I will watch the playing for a little while, to pass the time away. Jones, come."

Hardly necessary to say that, for the footman was right at her back, with a red cloak over his arm.

When the woman took her seat, the footman in green and buttons took his place behind her chair, standing, his arms folded.

Respect for the lady and for the mine-manager, who seemed to have made a conquest, might have brought respect for the statue in green and buttons.

But, exclusive of all that, there was a reason why he was respected for his own sake. Teddy's Tailings had seen a sample of his prowess, and no one was anxious to provoke him.

Faro Fan, the dealer, cast a keen glance at the woman in red as she sat down. In her presence, her own beauty looked even more sere and yellow than ever.

"The game is not exciting," remarked Bud Roeble, as Lady Peri sat down. "We seldom have any big playing here."

"It must always be exciting for the player I am sure," spoke the lady in red attire.

"Oh, I suppose so; but as long as it never gets out of the hundreds, the onlooker can feel but little interest in it."

"Right hyar's whar ye hev et in ther thousands, then, Buddy," spoke up Split-nose Budge.

He had been having a splendid run of luck, and his whole winnings, something over a thousand dollars, still reposed on the queen.

"What! You don't mean to say you are in luck, do you?" exclaimed the mine-manager. "It is about time. How in the world did you get your start?"

"Yas, luck is on my side ter-night, you bet. Ther queen hasn't lost a turn yet, fer me. I'm pullin' fer five thousand, hard. When I git that I'm goin' ter pull out."

"And get drunk, eh?"

"Mebby."

"You say the queen hasn't failed you once?"

"Nary a once, so fur, Buddy, old boy. I'm in fer et, sure."

"You will be in for it, I'm afraid, if you don't make a change. If the queen hasn't lost once, it's about time she did."

"Oh, ther old lady ar' goin' ter stick to me now, sartain. Another play after this hyar one, an' I'll be out on top of ther heap. Let 'er slide, Fan. Et ar' mine ergain, you bet."

The cards were drawn, and, sure enough, Split-nose won.

More than half of the looked-for five thousand was now his, and he was beside himself.

"Whoop!" he yelled, "what did I tell yer? Hyar et ar' yet, old gal, ready fer ther next queen. This hyar time, an' I'm fixed. I won't bu'st yer bank, fer I know when ter stop."

"Will you let me whisper a word to you out aloud?" asked Roeble.

"Yes, whisper away, et can't hurt me any. I'll soon be a swelled aristocrat, Buddy."

"You had better gather in these two thousand while you are sure of them, and play with your odd hundreds. One loss would ruin you."

"Ob, no, not any. Ef ther queen won, I'd want ter be kicked all over ther hull durn she bang."

"But, what if she loses?"

"I'd have ter grin an' bear et, I s'pose. But, she ain't goin' ter lose. I feel et in me bones that she ain't. Let 'er slide, Fan."

"Make your play, gentlemen."

"Would you like to play, for the fun of it, Lady Peri?" asked Roeble.

"Oh, I do not care much about it," was the easy response.

"I will place a stake for you, if you would care to try your luck."

"Oh, I would not think of your taking the trouble. Jones can do it, and I'll let him lay a small sum. Jones!"

"Yes, m'lady."

"You will place a thousand for me."

"Yes, m'lady."

"A thousand!" gasped Roeble. "You call that a trifling sum?"

"Why, yes; a mere nothing. Anything less would not be worth the while, you know."

"You have a good deal of nerve."

"Oh, no, not so."

The footman in green and buttons had unbuttoned his coat and taken a pocket-book from an inner pocket.

Opening it, he made an entry upon a slip with a pencil, and taking out a one-thousand-dollar note, held it in his teeth while he replaced the book in pocket.

"Where will you have him lay it, Lady Peri?" asked Roeble.

"Oh, anywhere; it makes no difference. Put it anywhere, Jones. It is gone, anyhow, and will help the bank to withstand the drain this gentleman is making."

"Et ar' purty likely ter come over ter my pile," declared Split-nose, with a grin.

"You are welcome to it if it does," was the quiet rejoinder.

The man Jones laid the bill on the tray, and the game being closed, the cards were drawn.

The first out was an ace, some blank draws followed, and then came a tray, and Lady Peri had won. The amount was promptly paid up, and the game continued.

Lady Peri allowed the whole sum to remain on the winning card, and in two turns it won again. Still it was allowed to stay there, and, before a queen had been seen, it won yet again.

Faro Fan was pale and slightly nervous.

Another loss and the bank would be broken—more than broken.

The man in green and buttons now gathered up the winnings, placing the original thousand on the deuce.

A sigh of momentary relief came from the dealer, as she said:

"Make your play, gentlemen, make your play."

CHAPTER IX.

SOMETHING AT SHOOTING.

THERE was enough interest around the table now.

Almost the whole crowd had flocked to that end of the room, to see the play of the red lady.

The man in green and buttons was as cool as ice, the lady in red none the less so, and if any one there was excited it was the dealer.

Split-nose Budge was watching every card with intense interest.

Since this other winner had come in he evidently felt less secure, yet his whole winnings were still on the card of his choice.

On the first draw, again, the deuce won for the lady in red, and on the next the queen came out for the bank.

Split-nose saw his big pile scooped off into the box, and he uttered a groan.

But it was a groan that was immediately followed by a howl.

"What did I tell you, Budge?" demanded Roeble.

"Yer is a cussed Jonah, that is what yer is!" screamed Budge, shaking his fist at Lady Peri.

"Hold on!" cried Roeble. "Have a care how you address this lady, sir, or I shall take it up for her. She had nothing to do with your loss."

"Yas she had, too. She changed ther luck

ther minnit she comed in. She ar' a cross-grain mascot, that's what she ar', an' I'm sayin' it. An' as fer you," turning to the footman, "you look out fer me."

The man in green and buttons was seemingly taking no notice of him.

"I tell you it was your own fault," cried Roeble, warmly. "Nobody but a fool would have stuck to one card with all his winnings for so long. It was bound to come out for the bank sooner or later."

"Et would 'a' been a good deal later, ef et hadn't been hoo-dooed."

"Nonsense! And don't let's hear any more whining out of you about it. If you are done playing, get out of the way."

Roeble spoke now in a way that meant business.

"No; do not force him away," spoke up Lady Peri. "He wrongs me by thinking that my playing has hurt him. The cards would have come out just the same, anyhow. But I do not care for that. Jones!"

"Yes, m'lady."

"Give the man the five thousand he was trying to win."

"Yes, m'lady."

The bullwhacker stared blankly. For that matter, everybody else stared in the same manner.

"You can't mean it!" exclaimed Roeble.

"Of course I mean it," assured the lady, smiling.

Her man was counting it out.

"But I won't have et!" suddenly cried Split-nose, getting power to speak.

"Then you is a double-blasted fool, that's all I has got ter say!" exclaimed one man who stood near him.

"But I'll tell yer what I will have," the bullwhacker continued, "an' that is 'venge on this hyar dummy in buttons. You green-livered skunk, you has got ter fight fer this."

"Let me say a word," spoke Lady Peri.

"Waal, say et."

"You have refused my generous offer."

"Yas; an' p'int blank, too. I wouldn't tetch et. Thar'd be no satterfaction in et ef I didn't win et meself, an'—"

"We won't discuss that. You have refused. Very well, the offer is withdrawn. Now, if you do not quiet down, I shall direct my footman to throw you through a window, so be warned."

"He kain't do et!" screamed the bullwhacker, wild in his rage over his loss, and also because, perhaps, he had not taken the offer.

"Make your play, gentlemen," spoke Faro Fan.

"Yas; I'm goin' ter make my play," cried Split-nose. "You come out hyar, you green an' brass dummy, till I shoot some of ther buttons off of yer duds. I kin do et, an' not half try."

Mr. Budge was proving the truth of what Roeble had said—that he was a fool.

"I will not do anything of the kind, sir, unless m'lady says I shall," was the footman's response. "If she says so, then it will be dear work for you, for I can shoot a little myself, I give you fair warning."

"He shall not fight with you, sir," decided the lady in red. "You are not worth the waste of powder."

"I'll show yer!" screamed the bullwhacker, growing more and more enraged at each passing second. "I'll show yer! Take that 'ar, an' see how et makes ye feel about et!"

With that, the dirty fellow took a quid of tobacco from his mouth and flung it at the footman, who barely dodged it, and it struck a Dutchman behind him squarely in the eye.

There was a whoop from Germany, instantly, and the same instant, as it seemed, there was the report of a revolver.

The whoop from the Dutchman was echoed by a scream of pain from Split-nose, and with hand clapped to the side of his head he went dancing around madly, continuing his howling.

It had been done so quickly that no one could at first tell what had happened.

The smoke was seen lifting from where the man in green and buttons stood, however, and he was discovered with a revolver in hand.

That he could have drawn and fired the shot, in so brief a moment of time, did not seem possible.

"He would have it," spoke Lady Peri, to Roeble, "and I do not blame Jones for what he did."

"What did he do?" asked Roeble. "I did not see him shoot. He must be lightning."

"He is well practiced, I assure you."

"I should say so."

"He has no doubt clipped the rascal's ear with a bullet."

"The deuce! I can't believe it."

"Cusses on yer!" now screamed the pirouetting bullwhacker, "what did yer do that 'ar fer?"

"You tried to improve my appearance," coolly responded the footman, "and I thought I would return the compliment."

"But, yer has shot my ear off!"

"Oh, no; I only put a hole in it, as I intended to do."

"An' I'll look purty, won't I!"

"It perhaps won't improve your looks any, that's so. But, it was your own fault."

"What was?" savagely.

"That you got it. You hadn't the sense to take m'lady's offer."

"An' yer means ter say that yer done et a purpose?"

"I certainly did. You had better draw out."

"Yer lies! Yer meant ter kill me, an' missed. Yer has got ter try et ergain."

"You are a greater fool than I took you to be," spoke up Lady Peri. "You are not wise enough for your own good, even."

"Mebby not, but I'm goin' ter have this hyer thing out, ef et costs me a leg an' both ears! Does yer hear that 'ar? I'm goin' ter have et out, an' you wants ter amble right out hyar to ther front!"

He moved toward the door, reaching his hand toward a weapon.

The red lady's footman did not follow, but kept his eye well upon him, as if looking for treachery.

He was not disappointed.

Suddenly the bullwhacker turned his revolver drawn, and lifted his arm to fire.

Snap!

It was the revolver's sharp report again, and the bullwhacker's weapon went flying out of his hand.

"Whoop! Yow-ow-wow!"

So cried Mr. Budge, as he shook his hand, dancing worse than ever.

"Yer has crippled me, cuss ye!" he screamed.

"Your own fault," said the lady. "You meant to kill him."

"Yer shell die fer et!" the fellow wailed. "Me hand is shattered, cl'ar to ther core!"

He ventured to look at it now, when, to his surprise, he was unable to see any blood on it whatever, and he looked silly.

"Why, yer fool, yer ain't hurt a bit," cried Teddy Terbune.

"Yas, I be, too," was the retort. "Reckon I'd orter know. But et don't bleed yet."

"No, ner et ain't goin' ter bleed, nuther," declared Dawson Kredge. "I don't see no marks on et er tall."

"Yer ain't hit!"

"Yer only thort so!"

"Haw! haw! haw! You is a gilly!"

The snap-shot had been at the weapon the bullwhacker had had in hand, and it had positively hit its mark.

"Take a look at his revolver," suggested the man in green and buttons.

It was picked up immediately, by the man to whom it lay nearest, and at once he raised a shout.

"Drat me," he bellowed, "ef ther t'other feller's bullet didn't go square in ther muzzle of ther gun, an' stay thar!"

"Impossible!"

"It can't be!"

"Let's see et!"

Such cries from every side.

So it was, for the fact, though the man in green would not have laid claim to having intended any such result.

He had simply taken a snap-shot at his foe's pistol hand, little caring what the effect was, since his own life depended on the shot.

"I warned him that I could shoot a little," the footman reminded.

"Shoot er little!" was the shout. "Mister Buttons, yer kin shoot big, an' that's ther fack!"

Split-nose Budge could not believe it till he had seen it for himself.

"Darn me ef et ain't so," he had to admit. "But, et war only chance. I'd show yer, ef me hand wasn't so numb."

"Then I am glad your hand is numb, sir," spoke Lady Peri. "It may be the one thing that saves your life. Now I hope you will go quietly away."

"If he doesn't," declared Bud Roeble, "I will have him locked up, that's all. Teddy, have him watched to see that he don't try a shot on the sly when this lady and her servant leave."

"Jest what I'll do, you bet on't," assured the worthy mayor.

Split-nose went out, leaving his revolver in the hands of the proprietor of the place. It was now a priceless curiosity. And, the fellow being gone, quiet was soon restored once more. It had been an exciting time for Teddy's Tailings.

CHAPTER X.

DROPS SOME HINTS.

LADY PERI stopped at the table.

And in doing so, she directed that half of her winnings be returned to the faro dealer, the other half to be given to the poor in the camp.

Such a disposition of winnings at cards was a surprise to all present. It was something new in the order of things. And it proved something in regard to Lady Peri.

That was, that she had means at her command, and did not, apparently, follow gambling as a profession.

"You are a wonder, Lady Peri," remarked Bud Roeble, who hovered near her.

"Oh, no; I cannot see that I am," was the smiling response.

She favored Roeble with her sweetest smiles.

"But I insist that you are. You have given away a small fortune."

"I am none the poorer for it, am I?"

"No; but it was yours."

"I cannot agree with you. Money exchanged at the gaming-table has no rightful owner except the first loser, whose toil earned it."

"You take a strange view of things."

"I take the right view, I think."

"Well, I am not prepared to argue with you. But, your servant—he is a marvel."

"He is an excellent attendant, I assure you. I am safe from insult, with him at my call. You have seen him display his muscle and marksmanship."

"Yes, indeed; and it seems still beyond belief. Where did you pick him up?"

"He came to me, well recommended."

"As he well might. I never saw his match, I am sure."

The man in green and buttons was right at the back of Lady Peri's chair now, holding everything.

"And you have not seen anything of him, yet. But, I will say no more, for praise is not good if too lavishly expended, I have been told."

"You mistake there. Nothing is so stimulating, where praise is honestly deserving. I want to say, though, that your man has undoubtedly made an enemy of the fellow he took down so nicely."

"Oh, no doubt bout it, but Jones fears him not."

"Still, it will be well for him to look out. You want to have your eyes well about you, my man."

"I am never asleep when I'm awake, sir," was the odd response.

"No; and perhaps you are never awake when you are asleep. You had better keep one eye open all the time."

"I'll endeavor to be on the lookout."

"And now, Lady Peri, will you honor me by taking a glass of wine with me?" asked Roeble.

"Obliged to you, sir; but it is somethin' I never indulge in," was the sweet response. "I merely came in here to see the sights, as I said, and I guess my curiosity has been about satisfied."

"You are not going so soon?"

"Would you have me stay longer?"

"One would prolong a great pleasure indefinitely."

"Now you would flatter me, sir."

"Indeed, no!"

"Perhaps you would die for me, and all that sort of thing," laughing.

"I am no foolish boaster. If occasion requires, and I can serve you, only command me, that is all."

"That sounds sincere. I rather like your manner, Mr. Roeble."

"Thank you. I only hope that you are as sincere as I am myself. You almost give me reason to love you."

"Nonsense, Mr. Roeble. But, let us go out from here. Would you mind giving me your arm for a little stroll? You know you just bade me command you."

"I can scarcely believe that I am so honored," the mine-manager cried. "You need not call it a command. It is a higher favor conferred. I would not have dared hope for so great a pleasure."

"No flattery, sir. I detest a flatterer. Jones, follow me within a few yards during my walk."

"Yes, m' lady."

The lady in red and the mine-manager passed out of the room, the footman following as ordered.

Once without, the manager offered his arm to the lady, it was accepted, and they strolled off in the direction of the mine buildings.

There was no moon, but the night was not a dark one, and the air was delightfully cool and refreshing. It was just the sort of an evening for a ramble, even though it was growing late.

Any amount of small talk was indulged in between the two, none of which is worthy of quoting.

"You say this is the mine of which you are manager?" Lady Peri asked, finally, when they neared the buildings.

"Yes; I happen to hold that position, Lady Peri," was the response.

"Is your mine a good one?"

"It has been a very good one."

"You speak of it as though on the wane."

"So it has been, of late. I am in hopes that it will improve, however."

"Why, yes, for your sake so do I. Perhaps you are a stockholder in it, as well as manager."

"I happen to hold very little stock. I am all concern for those who do, however."

"As I can well believe. What is the prospect for the mine?"

"I believe it is coming up. The vein seems to be growing better again, at present."

"That is good."

"It is just possible that you hold stock in it."

"Oh, no, I do not. But, like you, I am concerned for those who do. It is always bad for the losers."

"Still, as I say, I have hopes that it will come out all right. It is bad for the mine, however, even though it should turn out better than ever. But, this must be dry talk for you."

"Oh, no, I assure you not."

"Shall we turn back? The path is very rugged beyond this."

"Yes; let us return. And, Mr. Roeble, would you grant me a slight favor?"

"You have only to name it."

"Will you escort me into the mine to-morrow?"

"It is hardly a fit place for you to go, Lady Peri, but if you would like—"

"And I would, ever so much!"

"Then it is settled. I will call for you to-morrow and show you all there is to be seen. You will need a rough dress, of course."

"I will be prepared. Jones may accompany me?"

"Why, yes, if you wish it so."

And so it was arranged, and when finally Roeble parted company with the lady in red at the hotel, he voted her the most charming woman he had ever met.

Roeble immediately sought Wishby.

He found him in the bar-room of his establishment.

Grasping the hand of his friend, he shook it heartily before he said a word.

"You seem to feel mighty good," Wishby remarked.

"And so I do, you can bet, old fellow!" was the response.

"What has happened? Have you broken Faro Fan's bank?"

"You know I don't buck the tiger. I leave that sort of business for the fool portion of the camp."

"Well, what then?"

"The Lady Peri."

"What of her?"

"I have made an impression, sure as you live."

"Good for you. I'm glad I'm not your rival, as I would have been, only for the coming of the other."

"And what of her? Have you seen her?"

"Oh, no; her fond papa tucked her away in bed at an early hour."

"That reminds me of old Walsingham. I suppose I shall have to stand an interview with him in the morning."

"Most assuredly. But, what of it? You can swell his head, big as it is already. He thinks he knows it all, and some more. Pat him on the back well."

"Yes; with a club, as I'd like to. I want him to make his business brief, at the office."

"Something else on hand, eh?"

"Lady Peri is coming to let me show her through."

"The deuce she is! She must be stuck on you, and that's the fact."

"No more so than I am on her, and maybe not half so much. If she stays here a week I'm going to propose to her."

"Whew! That's rushing it. Maybe there's a husband in the background."

"I don't care anything about that, if she don't. Whether she is maid, wife or widow, it is all one to me. I'd marry her if she were a grandmother. And then her man Jones will be looking for a situation mighty quick, I can tell you."

"Then you don't admire him?"

"Only for the handy way in which he has served his mistress. He's too much in the way. So much so that you can't say a word in private to the woman."

"I hope you'll get rid of him, then. But, what about the clean-up?"

"We'll see to that after Walsingham goes away."

"Yes; but suppose he has come here on purpose to be present?"

"Then, confound him, we won't clean up, that is all. We'll declare the mill is out of order, and must be fixed."

"Wouldn't it be better to run in a lot of lean stuff?"

"Haven't got it to run in, as you know."

"Then we'll have to resort to a trick, that is to say, *you* will. Put the mill out of order so that it can't be repaired in a month. He won't stay here that long, with his daughter."

"Unless you can win her heart, and induce her to stay longer, eh?"

"Ha! That is the other view of it, isn't it. But, all the more reason why they should stay."

"And if you are not so successful as I have been, what then?"

"There are more ways than one to skin a cat."

"Well, there's no use dwelling upon these things till after I have had it out with Walsingham. Then we'll know what we are about."

"Right you are. And we'll have to be about it, too, perhaps."

"We are ready. But, by the way, you will have a good chance to court the fair Verenia while her dad is interviewing me. Throw yourself right into it for all you are worth."

"I intend to. Maybe we'll soon be able to give Teddy the job of tying a double knot before long, eh?"

"And then to settle down to enjoy life. Ha, ha, ha! We will be well fixed for it, anyhow, and will have a pair of charming partners to help us blow it in. Oh, we are wide awake, I fancy, Roeble."

CHAPTER XI.

PECULIAR WORKINGS.

NEXT morning Mr. Walsingham made his inquiries for Roeble.

That gentleman was not hard to find, and after preliminary greeting the two went to the mine office.

"Now, sir," Walsingham demanded, when they were seated, "I want to know the whole truth about this mine."

"Well, sir, it is told in few words," answered Roeble. "It has well nigh petered out, but I think it is picking up again now. I think it will come up again all right."

"And you give me that as your candid opinion?"

"I do, sir."

"Then, if you were me, you would not unload your stock at a great sacrifice, eh?"

"I would not, positively."

"Let me tell you that I carry a big load of it."

"So much the better for you, then."

"You are confident?"

"I wish I had a capital to buy up some of it while it is depressed, that's all, sir."

"Ha! that sounds more like it. Now, would you advise me to buy up more of it, and so get a controlling interest? A little more would give me that."

"Now, sir, you are pushing me too far. Mining is uncertain. While I feel sure that this vein is growing better again, there is a chance that it may not last. I wouldn't want you to increase your risk on my word."

"Yet you say you would buy yourself, had you the means?"

"Yes, I would do that."

"Good enough. I know what I will do, then. I will depress the market still more and gather in what I can."

"Your report will hardly hold, if you do not back it up by selling, will it, sir?"

"That's so. I'll have to make a blind deal. But I can easily fix that with my banker. I'll tell him to dispose of a hundred shares at any figure, and, on the quiet, buy up five hundred."

"That will do it, nicely."

"But let us go and see this ore."

"I hope you are a good judge of it, sir."

"On the contrary, I'm no judge at all."

"Too bad. But I'll explain it to you. Come on."

They passed out, and after an hour's inspection, Mr. Walsingham left the mine with the impression that he had one of the best things in the world, there.

Roeble had done all he had promised Wishby he would do, and maybe more.

Whatever their scheme was, it was working well so far as Mr. Walsingham was concerned.

Walsingham had been gone but a few minutes when Lady Peri entered the office.

She was accompanied by her man Jones, as usual, and was warmly received by the delighted manager.

"You have surprised me, Lady Peri," he cried.

"And, pray, how so?" the lady in red asked.

"By coming here."

"Why, I told you I would come, did I not?"

"True; but I dared not hope that you meant it, or at any rate that you would remember the engagement."

"You will find that Lady Peri is not so fickle," was the smiling response.

"And I see you are prepared for the visit into the tunnel, too. Very good, I am ready."

The little lady had on a pair of heavier shoes than those in which she had made her appearance into the camp, and also a dark skirt over her pretty red.

"My footman will accompany me," the lady remarked.

"To be sure, if you desire it."

"He accompanies me everywhere I go, you know."

"As I have learned. Have you ever visited a mine before?"

"No; and I anticipate much pleasure, though I shall be a troublesome visitor, I am afraid."

"Why so?"

"You will have to explain everything."

"The greater the pleasure to me, then, since it will take the longer."

So talking, they passed out of the office and toward the tunnel, the manager and the lady in red going side by side.

The man in green and buttons brought up the rear at a few paces distant, and walked as stiff and orderly as a new recruit on dress parade, with eyes set straight before him.

The manager talked in his most lively manner, and was trying his best to do the agreeable, and to all appearance his companion was well pleased with everything he said.

It did look as though he had made a conquest, as he claimed to be the case, for the lady in red was prompt to meet him at every advance.

As they went along, a very close observer might have noticed that the footman was not uninterested in things.

His quick eyes took in everything, without seeming to do so, and he listened to all that was said by the oily-tongued manager.

After inspecting the tunnel, the lady was taken through the mill, where the process of extracting the gold from the refuse was fully explained, and where the manager endeavored to deepen the impression he believed he had made.

It was here, too, that the man in green showed unusual interest, though he was not spoken to, of course.

His menial position would not admit of that, on the part of either.

Finally it was done, and Roeble accompanied his fair charmer back to the hotel.

On the end of the piazza sat Verenia Walsingham.

She was alone, but had not long been so, for Ferd Wishby had recently been with her there.

Lady Peri had to pass near her, and spoke to her in her pleasant manner.

Verenia's reception of her was rather cool.

The lady in red paused, as if about to ask something or make some remark, but did not do so, and passed on.

Verenia called to her.

She came back immediately, smiling pleasantly.

"I will ask your pardon for not greeting you more civilly," said Verenia.

"And you have it, certainly," was the response. "I noticed that you did not appear pleased."

"I am puzzled, that is all."

"And of course I know why."

"Well, why?"

"I have warned you against that man Roeble, and yet—"

"And yet I find you accepting his attentions with every indication of pleasure."

"That is it."

"And it is that which puzzles me."

"Are you prepared to believe my word, Miss Walsingham?"

"Your actions are not in keeping with what you have told me before."

"I admit it. Let me urge, however, that what I said to you was the truth. I cannot explain more now. You will shortly have reason to think better of me than perhaps you now do."

"You seem to have insinuated Mr. Roeble."

"And with a purpose. I despise him utterly. Do not betray me in this; I speak only to reassure you."

"You may trust me. I have just been dealing with Mr. Wishby according to the hint you gave me. I guess he thinks me a tartar."

"What has he been doing?"

"Trying to make me fall in love with him, I fancy. Ha! ha!"

"Be as wary of him as you would of a snake. It is no idle warning I give you, Miss Walsingham."

Mr. Walsingham was now approaching, so Lady Peri passed on, her footman following her into the house.

"What was that woman saying to you?" Walsingham demanded.

"I did not speak to her very civilly when she came up the steps, and she noticed it."

"Served her right, too. Don't be familiar with her, for I don't like her way. She's not your sort, Verenia, dear."

That was all that was said about it, the father taking the opportunity to say how well pleased he was with his inspection of the mine, after which he entered the bar-room to write some letters.

While this was going on, Roeble and Wishby had met in the Nightmare.

Roeble was all smiles, Wishby all frowns.

"You look as cheerful as a funeral, Ferd," Roeble greeted.

"And you appear happy enough to make up for it. What tickles you so mighty highly?"

"Why, the way things are working, of course. Old Walsy don't know a thing about mining, and we can do the clean-up right under his very eyes."

"I'm glad of that, anyway."

"Then why don't you smile? Come, what has run your spirits below zero?"

"That girl has frozen me."

"Ha! ha! That's pretty good, I vow."

"It's so. She is as cold as ice, and the more I try to break through, the colder she gets, till she freezes me clear out entirely."

"That is a bad state of things, true enough. But, there is time yet, for by what the old man said he is going to stay some time. I'll speak a good word for you, for I am solid with him."

"And with Lady Peri too, I take it."

"I should say so. Leave me alone, Ferd, and I'll get there, you bet. Now, let us talk business for a few minutes."

And they talked business accordingly.

While they were thus engaged Mr. Walsingham was interrupted at his writing.

It was a terrific cough that interrupted him, and it was so close at his elbow that it gave him a start.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Consumptive Chet, "but I went off suddenly and couldn't help it. I won't bark much longer. Part of my liver came up this morning."

"Confound you, you are enough to make a man shudder!" cried Mr. Walsingham. "You look like death itself. What do you want, anyhow?" If there's anything I can do for—"

"Don't mention et, sir. You have been to see that mine."

"Well, what of it?"

"You are impressed that it is played out, and—"

"What need it matter to you how I am impressed? What is it to you? If you have anything—"

"Pardon, I must cough. Let me speak before I do. If you believe that mine is going down, it isn't so. It was never better. Keep your eye open, and don't mention that I told you this."

At that he stopped, and went coughing out of the room, almost taking himself off his feet at every cough.

CHAPTER XII.

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED.

MR. WALSINGHAM looked after the consumptive with a frown.

"Confound him!" he muttered. "What does he mean? What is it to him, anyhow? I've a mind to speak to Roeble."

He continued glaring at the floor, even after

the Cadaver had passed out of sight, and it was some moments before he resumed his writing.

When the consumptive had finished his spell of coughing, he entered the house and went to his room, where he was soon engaged in the same occupation as Mr. Walsingham.

The next mail that went from Teddy's Tailings carried conflicting reports regarding the condition of the Ripe Pear.

That evening, at the Nightmare Saloon, Mr. Walsingham mentioned to Roeble the hint Cadaver had dropped.

At first the mine-manager appeared to look uneasy, as Mr. Walsingham was able to detect.

When he spoke, however, his words were calculated to disarm suspicion.

"It is my word against that of such a fellow, then?"

"No; I have merely repeated what he said."

"As if I do not know the mine."

"Don't be offended, Mr. Roeble. I took little stock in it. Why should I? I have all confidence in you."

"I have a right to be offended, after the hint I have given you. Still, I am willing to let it pass. What interest has he in the mine?"

"You ask me too much, now."

"Well, he had better keep his nose out of what doesn't concern him, I can tell him. You want to look out for him, Mr. Walsingham. He has an ax to grind, be sure of that."

"I can see that, of course, but it puzzles me to know what it can be. Now, if he had run the mine down, saying it was no good, it would have been different; but you see he says it was never better. It is queer, isn't it."

"Oh, well, don't trouble your mind about it. I have told you the truth of the matter. I will have an eye upon him."

There was more talk of a similar sort.

"How does your daughter like it here?" Roeble presently asked.

"Very well, I guess," was the response. "The novelty hasn't worn off yet, you know."

"I am glad she likes it. Her stay will be more pleasant."

"Oh, Verenia can adapt herself to anything."

"There is something I feel that I ought to speak about, Mr. Walsingham."

"And what is that?"

"Your daughter has won a lover here."

"What?"

"That is what I mean."

"Who is the rascal? I'll love him!"

"There, there, don't be hasty. Hear me out first."

"Well, out with it, then. I'll see if I can't cure him of all that."

"Don't be hasty, sir. This person is a friend of mine, or I would not have spoken."

"Who is he?"

"Ferd Wishby."

"Confound him for his impudence!"

"Don't be hard on him, sir. You don't know Ferd as I do."

"But he's no fit person to love my daughter, sir, and I won't have it. I'll stop him."

"Mr. Walsingham, I wouldn't have mentioned this, if it hadn't been that I like Ferd so well. I want him let down easy."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I suspected that you wouldn't take kindly to the thing, when you came to find it out, and I thought I'd speak first. Ferd is an A 1 fellow, educated and rich, and a man every inch."

"Well?"

"And when he sets his affection upon a woman, he means business. If there is no chance for him, he ought to know it, that's all."

"And know it he shall, too! Why, I know nothing about him, and I cannot allow this to go on."

"Then be kind with him, and tell him so, before he gets too far gone—though I imagine he's clear gone already."

And on this point, too, there was further talk during the ensuing half-hour.

About the time when Walsingham left the saloon to return to the hotel, Wishby entered and joined Roeble.

"Well, old man, I've done it," remarked Roeble.

"You've done what?"

"Said a word for you to Old Walsy."

"The deuce you have! What have you said to him?"

"Oh, about what we arranged, you know. He don't take to it."

"Just as I thought it would be. Neither does the girl, confound her!"

"You'll have to play your points better than you have, Ferd. I don't want to see you get left."

"And you won't, either!"

But, when two weeks had passed, Ferd Wishby did not seem to be any nearer the goal than he had been at first.

Yes, two weeks passed by without striking incident of any sort. During that time the camp had enjoyed a season of unusual quiet.

Lady Peri and her footman in the green and buttons were still at the hotel, as were Mr. Walsingham and his daughter. The poor consumptive was there, too, still above ground.

Bud Roeble's suit had progressed finely.

He had not proposed yet, but he was sure of acceptance—too sure.

Lady Peri had never said a word to discourage him, but bad rather led him on, though she never for an instant relaxed her ladylike dignity.

Wishby, on the other hand, had made no progress at all, as stated. But he was not in despair. Other plans were in his mind, and in Roeble he had an able supporter.

One day, about this time, Mr. Walsingham tore into the office of the mine like a wild man.

"What in blazes is the meaning of this?" he thundered.

"The meaning of what?" asked Roeble.

"This letter."

"What about it?"

"You know I directed my agent to drop a hundred shares at short notice, and then buy up all he could on the quiet."

"I know that was your plan, sir."

"Well, the hundred were unloaded easily enough, but when it came to buying up more, they were not to be had."

"You don't say so! What do you make of that?"

"Don't you see?"

"A conflicting report must have leaked out."

"Yes; and ten to one it was the work of that darned Consumptive Chet."

"You think so? Why, I have watched that fellow well, and he don't seem to have any interest in the matter."

"Then, if it wasn't him, who was it?" Mr. Walsingham demanded, with more of force than of grammatical elegance.

"I can't imagine."

"Well, you see what it has done for me."

"I see, and I'm sorry for you. It's too bad, and I wish I could help you."

"Yes; but your wishes don't help me worth a cent. Instead of strengthening my hold, I have weakened it."

"But, you don't blame me, do you?"

"Yes, in a way, I do."

"And why so?"

"Because you approved of my course when I spoke of the plan."

"Well, now, that is rather far-fetched, don't you think so? How could I foresee anything of this sort?"

"I tell you what it is, Roeble, I would go to any length, almost, to recover that hundred shares of stock, if the mine is going to come up all right."

"I don't doubt that."

"Well, isn't there some plan?"

Roeble was thoughtful for some moments.

"I believe I do see a ghost of a chance for you," he said.

"And what is it?" was the eager demand.

"Ferd Wishby might help you, on conditions."

"You mean for my daughter?"

"Yes."

"Never! I'm not a scrupulous man by any means, Roeble, but I wouldn't do a thing so mean as that."

"Then I don't see any other way."

"Fact is, I like your friend the less, the more I see of him."

Their interview was not long, and as soon after it as possible Roeble found occasion to talk with Wishby.

"The deuce is to pay!" he declared.

"What is it now?" Wishby asked.

"The fact is out about the mine."

He told what he had just learned.

"And what does that mean?" asked Wishby.

"It looks a trifle like danger ahead," was the answer.

"And what's going to be done about it? Who is the accused spy?"

"Old Walsy thinks it's the Cadaver. I don't know. As to what's to be done, the clean-up must be bad, and then I'll skip."

"And what about me?"

"Oh, you are safe; you can't be suspected."

"And the old fool is bound to stay to the clean-up anyhow."

"It seems so, and the sooner it is over the better. It must not be put off."

"You think others will come?"

"Sure; and they may be men who can't be fooled."

"Then let's have it over with, by all means."

"Regarding the girl?"

"You bet."

"All right, and I'm ready to aid you all I can."

Just then a terrible cough, outside the window near which they were standing, startled them both.

There was no need to look to see who it was, for they knew at once. They did look, however, to see what Consumptive Chet was doing there.

CHAPTER XIII.

VERENIA'S FLAT REFUSAL.

They saw the Cadaver making his way toward the front of the saloon.

He was not in haste, and there was nothing to prove that he had been listening.

It was quite probable that he had been passing that way, and had happened to cough as he was under the window.

"What do you think about it?" asked Wishby.

"I don't know what to think," was Roeble's response.

"Do you suppose he was listening?"

"He may have been; and yet it's an even chance that he wasn't."

"Anyhow, I wish he'd turn up his toes, without any more fooling about it. I don't see what he hangs on for, do you?"

"He won't hang on much longer. He gets weaker by the hour. But, let's cut short for this time. I am going to see Lady Peri, and put things to the test."

"The deuce you are!"

"Yes; for I want to know the truth before the clean-up."

"To govern yourself accordingly, eh? Ha! ha! Well, I wish you better luck than I have had."

Some further words and they parted.

Bud Roeble passed out of the saloon by a rear way, and came out upon the one street of the camp as though he had just come from the office.

He advanced toward the hotel, where Lady Peri was seated upon the piazza.

"His Buttons" was seated respectfully behind her, ready to obey any order she might be pleased to give.

Roeble approached with an easy air, lifting his hat to the lady as he sprang up the steps, and she held out her hand to him.

"You seem happy this morning, Mr. Roeble," the lady remarked.

"And so I am, in expectation," was the response, as he took her hand and gave it a fond pressure.

She did not withdraw it.

"In expectation?" she repeated inquiringly.

"Yes, Lady Peri. I hope to be still more happy within the hour."

"I hope that you may."

"Will you allow me to speak with you in private, Lady Peri?"

"We are in private right here, if you speak low," was the response.

"Yes; but your man is here. He is in the way. Can't you send him off to do something?"

"Jones? Never mind him. Speak right out, the same as though he were not by. I have no secrets from him, none whatever."

Roeble looked annoyed, but put on a brave face.

"Well, the whole thing right out, Lady Peri, is this: Will you marry me?"

Still she did not withdraw her hand, nor did she evidence any surprise. She merely looked down, thoughtfully.

"Why should I marry you?" she asked.

"Because I love you," was the earnest answer.

"I am going to be frank with you, Mr. Roeble."

"I want you to be so; but, do not dash my hopes to the ground."

"I am well off as I am. I do not love you, and if I marry you there must be some inducement."

"Do you mean to ask what I am worth?"

"Yes. This is no sentiment on my part; it is business. I am rich myself, and if I marry at all I must marry rich."

"I am no beggar, Lady Peri

"Something over a million."

"Whew!"

Roeble fell back amazed.

"Can it be possible?" he gasped.

"Why not?" was the smiling response.

"And you will not marry me unless I can show equal wealth?"

"I don't believe I will. I should have to think over it for some time."

"You are unjust, Lady Peri."

"I am a woman of business."

"There was no mercenary thought in my mind. I knew not how much or how little you were worth."

"That is true."

"And yet I offered myself, with all I have. I can boast a cool hundred thousand."

"You are pretty well secured, then, after all."

"Yes; but that is far from a million. Pray do not hold me to such a demand, Lady Peri."

"I am inclined to be more easy with you."

"What terms will you accept?"

"I must have proof for the amount you name."

"You shall have it."

"When?"

"As soon as you please."

"Now?"

"Well, not at a moment's notice. May I trust you, Lady Peri?" in a lower tone.

"Would you ask me to marry you, if you could not?"

"Pardon such a question. Dare you come to the office of the mine to-night, alone, at nine?"

"I dare, certainly."

"If you will do so, I will give you the proof you ask."

"Then you prohibit Jones from accompanying me?"

"Yes; I must. While I trust you yourself, I will not repose the same confidence in him. You must come alone."

"Very good, I will be there."

"And you will decide then, after you have had the proof?"

"Not at once. You must give me time enough to think it over. To-morrow I may be prepared to answer you."

"I can ask nothing fairer than that. Is there any other condition that I am required to fill before there is hope for me? I hope not."

"No; I will impose no other. Show me the wealth you claim to have, as proof that you are no mere fortune-hunter, and it will be enough. A million awaits you if I marry you."

With a few soft nothings, then, and a fond pressure of the hand, Roeble went off toward the mine.

He was in high feather now, and believed that he had won his suit.

When he had passed out of sight, Lady Peri rose and entered the house, her servant in the buttons following her, and together they entered her room.

"Have I done right?" the lady asked.

"You have played your part nobly!" was the approval.

And then they fell to planning, in secret, for moves to be made.

While they were there, and thus engaged, something else was going on in the little apology for a parlor below.

Miss Walsingham had been there alone, reading, when Ferd Wishby entered in a rather abrupt manner.

At sight of her, he stopped short, as though he had not expected to find her there.

"I crave pardon, Miss Walsingham," he exclaimed. "I see I have startled you. I was not aware that you were here."

"There is no harm done, Mr. Wishby," was the response.

"Are you not lonesome?" he asked.

"Oh, no, indeed! Don't you see, I have a book."

"Yes; so I see. May I sit down for a moment?"

"Why, isn't the house yours, Mr. Wishby?"

"True; but you are holding this room by right of prior occupancy."

"You have my permission, then."

"Thank you," and he took a seat.

The young lady let her eyes fall again upon her book.

"There is something I would say to you, Miss Walsingham," the man spoke.

"Yes?" inquisitively.

"I am going to ask you, plainly and simply, to be my wife."

"And I have told you, plainly and simply, that I never will," was the retort.

With the words, the young woman closed her book with a snap, and rose and started toward the door.

The man rose quickly and placed himself in her way.

"I am determined that you shall hear me out," he said.

"You will detain me by force?"

"If necessary, yes."

"You are less a man than I thought you were, and my former estimation was low enough."

Her tone and words were cutting.

"What a perfect little fury you look!" the fellow offered as though for a compliment.

"I desire to leave this room, sir!"

"And I want you to remain just a moment. Verenia Walsingham, I have made up my mind to marry you, and if you won't have me willingly, you will have to take me anyhow. Now I have warned you."

"You intend that for a threat?"

"Oh, no, not at all; merely an expression of my fondness for you. You are to be mine, and I defy you to get out of it if you can."

"Is that all you have to say, sir?"

"That is all, for the present, I guess."

"And I may be allowed a word?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, then, this to begin with!" and her right arm came up with a revolver clasped in her white hand.

"You don't mean to shoot?"

"Yes; unless you step aside this instant. There, that is better. And now hear me: If you come in my way again, Mr. Wishby, I will shoot you as I would a dog. Do not forget it."

She was gone the next moment, and the proprietor of the hotel was left to stare blankly at the door.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" he muttered to himself. "I wouldn't have believed it, by Harry!"

He seemed to be too surprised to move away from the spot, at first.

"No, sir, I wouldn't have believed it was in her!" he exclaimed, striking his fist into his hand. "But, I'll show her a trick worth two of that. I'll tame her proud spirit before I am done with her. I'll have her now, if it makes trouble all around the circle. I'll have her, I swear it!"

And with that he left the room in no gentle temper.

CHAPTER XIV.

SPRINGING A SURPRISE.

TRUE to her word, Lady Peri left the hotel about nine o'clock, and alone.

Nothing was seen of "His Buttons," as the servant in green and buttons was familiarly known.

She made her way immediately to the office of the mine, having by this time become familiar with the lay of the land in and about the camp.

There was a dim light in the office, as she was able to make out as she drew near, and advancing boldly, she tapped lightly upon the door. As she did so, she heard the chirp of a cricket in the darkness.

The door was promptly opened by Roeble.

Lady Peri stepped in without hesitation, and the door closed upon her.

"You have kept your word," the pleased mine-manager remarked.

"As I always do, Mr. Roeble," was the response.

"Will you sit down?"

"I desire to remain as short a time as possible, sir."

"Very well, it shall be as brief as I can make it. But sit down for a minute, while I explain something."

The lady obeyed.

"The proof which I must show you, Lady Peri," the man went on, "is not here in the office, nor am I able to bring it here. Dare you go with me to where it is?"

"This is strange, Mr. Roeble. Still, I feel that I may trust you."

"I assure you that you may."

"Then I will go with you."

The man eyed her sharply.

"Are you alone?" he demanded.

"I assure you that I came here alone, Mr. Roeble. But, why are you so very particular about it all?"

"For the reason, Lady Peri, that the fortune I spoke to you about is buried in a gulch not far from here, and were its hiding-place to become known, it would be sure to be stolen."

"Ah! Now I can understand. Yes; I am ready to accompany you."

"Then we will go at once, and the sooner get back. Let me light this dark-lantern, and we'll be off."

"He took up a bull's-eye from a closet under the desk as he spoke, and when he had lighted it, put out the other light and was ready.

"Now," he spoke, "open the door and step out, and I will turn off the light and be with you. You can understand that I do not want to be followed on an errand of this sort."

"I fully understand," was the response.

Lady Peri stepped out, and a moment later the man followed, closing and locking the door.

"Now, if you will accept my arm," he said, "you will be safe from falling and I will quickly lead you to the place of our destination."

The lady accepted, and they moved away in the darkness.

Again the chirp of the cricket was heard, and then all was still.

But Roeble led his fair companion out of the valley pocket, and little was said until they entered the gulch.

Here it was less likely that any one would overhear them, and Roeble spoke, half aloud:

"You see the risk I am taking for your sake," he reminded.

"Rather for your own sake," the lady corrected.

"For the hope of winning you," he put it. "There isn't another soul in the world to whom I would reveal this thing."

"Then I ought to feel honored."

"You ought to admit it as proof that I love you."

"We will not talk about that now, Mr. Roeble. Let us attend strictly to the business in hand."

"Anything to please you. We are nearing the place now."

He turned the slide in the lantern a little, and cast a ray of light upon the rough trail ahead of them.

A little further on, and he stopped short.

"We are here," he said.

"Your treasure is not far from camp," Lady Peri remarked.

"I thought it best not to have it too far. Still I might have placed it a little further off than this, had not this been such an excellent hiding-place. Will you hold the lantern?"

She accepted it, and cast the light where he directed.

Stepping to the wall, he reached into a niche and drew forth an iron bar.

With that he attacked a crack in the wall, near the bottom, and tried to pry a part of the rock away.

Presently it moved back, and further and further as he renewed his hold with the bar and pulled again and again, and a cavity was disclosed.

"There," he hoarsely whispered, "flash your light in there."

Lady Peri stooped and did as directed, and the hole was found to be quarter filled with bright gold.

"What do you see?" he demanded.

"Gold! and plenty of it," was the response.

"Right! Half of it is mine, to the value of a hundred thousand."

"Only half of it? Then to whom belongs the other half? I supposed it your own, all of it."

"No; part of it belongs to Wishby."

"Fortunate Wishby! But, it is in your power to deprive him of his share."

"What do you mean?"

"You might decamp with the whole of it."

"Yes; I suppose I might. Still, I rather like Ferd, and it would be rough on him."

"Even if there were no other reason, eh?"

"What do you mean now?"

"Lady Peri is not blind. You two have been pards in some desperate game, I take it. But, that is nothing to me."

"Perhaps you are right, Lady Peri, though I do not admit it. All the same, I will admit that Ferd has something of a grip on me, and I wouldn't dare to play him so mean a trick as that."

"Nor would I want you to. Your half of this splendid pile is no beggar's portion, that is certain."

"Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly."

"And your answer?"

"To-morrow."

"Very well, I will wait."

Roeble rose and took up the bar again, and with it pried the stone back into place, after which he put the bar where he had found it.

"We will now return," he said.

"Yes; let us not delay," responded the lady.

"Have I not kept my word with you?"

"So let it drop, then. I am not without hope, Lady Peri. I shall be very busy to-morrow, however."

"Yes?"

"Yes; it is clean-up day."

"Then I will let you know very early in the morning."

At that it was dropped, and they talked of other things as they retraced their steps to the office.

There Roeble left the lantern, and accompanied Lady Peri on to the steps of the hotel piazza, where he bade her good-night and left her.

Next morning the bubble burst.

When Roeble went to the office, at an early hour, a surprise awaited him.

The office was open, and in the chair at the desk sat Jones, the man of the green and buttons.

"Hello!" exclaimed Roeble, in great surprise.

"Ditto to you," was the cool response.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to give you your answer."

"From Lady Peri?"

"Just so."

"But, how came this office open? How did you get in here?"

Roeble was unable to comprehend it. Not a suspicion of the truth of it all came to him.

"Why, I opened the office," was the answer, "and proceeded to make myself at home till you arrived. Not going to get mad about it?"

"You opened the office!"

"Yes."

"Well, darn your impudence, anyhow! But, what word to you bring?"

"M'lady says she can't marry you."

"Can't marry me? What reason does she give?"

"She can't marry you because she is a wife already, sir."

"A wife! Get out, you're fooling. If I thought you were, I'd kick you out."

"You might find that you couldn't do it."

"Be careful, or I'll try it on, anyhow. I am no blowing bullwhacker, like Split-nose Budge."

"No; I don't believe you're as good a man."

"Pah! I do not quarrel with servants. Who is the husband of Lady Peri?"

"I am."

"You?"

"Exactly."

"And who are you, then?"

"Well, my name is Richard M. Bristol, but I am better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior."

Bud Roeble reeled back as though shot.

The redoubtable Richard had now risen, and had him covered with a revolver.

"I see you have heard of me," he remarked, smiling.

"Y—yes, I have heard of you," the fellow gasped. "Who—who is Lady Peri? I have been tricked."

"Yes; you have been tricked, truly. Lady Peri is no other than my wife, my dauntless doublet in this case. Bud Roeble, you are my prisoner!"

The fellow seemed to be regaining a little of his nerve.

"What do you arrest me for?" he asked, stepping carelessly to the corner of the desk, in the face of the weapon.

"I arrest you for your swindling operations in this mine. We have given you plenty of rope, and you have hanged yourself beautifully. The little jig is up, Mr. Roeble."

"It is, eh?" with Satanic sarcasm. "Suppose you take a tumble."

CHAPTER XV.

KATE TO THE RESCUE.

DEADWOOD DICK was on the alert, as he saw the man's smile, but the thing that happened was a thing least looked for, there.

With his words, Roeble pressed upon something behind the desk with his foot, and instantly a trap opened and Dick felt himself going down.

He fired, but his shot did not take effect, and the next second he plunged into water that was over his depth, and its surface closed over him in darkness.

Managing to get his revolver back into his belt, he struck out to swim, and was soon on the surface, where, by the dim light that came from above, he was able to look around.

He was in what appeared to be a mine shaft.

On all sides was nothing but jagged rock, with no means of climbing up, so far as he could see.

He looked up, and saw his foe bending over the opening, peering down. He was tempted to shoot, but on second thought refrained from doing so.

"How do you like it?" Roeble called down. "I can't see you, but I know you are there. If you can swim, you may be good for half an hour; if not, then you are as good as dead now."

He drew back, and the door closed with a slam, and all below was inky darkness.

"Well, I'll be shrived if I haven't got into a fix!" Dick muttered to himself. "Who would have thought of such a thing as that? How am I going to get out of it? I took a tumble, and no mistake."

Reaching the nearest wall, he supported himself by grasping a corner of rock, and listened.

He heard steps overhead for a moment; then followed the closing of a door, and after that all was still.

"He's gone out," mused Dick. "I won't have to wait long for help, now."

He knew that Kate, his wife, was on the watch, and seeing Roeble come out alone, she would know something had happened.

Leaving the office in haste, Roeble rushed immediately to the Whip-poor-will and demanded Wishby.

His exclamation when they met will not bear repetition in print.

"What's that you say?" demanded Wishby.

"It is all up. We have got to get our stuff and git!"

"Yes; but what's the matter? What's up?"

"Deadwood Dick is after us, hot—or was."

"Who is he—where is he?"

"You know well enough who he is; and as to where he is—well, the dogs won't bite him."

"And what's going to be done?"

"Two things, and mighty soon."

"What are they?"

"I have mentioned one. The other is, to get our revenge at the same time."

"You talk in riddles to me."

"Can't you guess? But, no wonder. You know Lady Peri and her man in buttons."

"Yes."

"Well, they were none other than this Deadwood Dick and his wife. We ought to have suspected him, seeing what we did of him."

Wishby was almost too surprised to speak.

"And they have been playing you for a sucker, eh?"

"Just what I am, too! Curse them! they played it well, I must say that much for them."

"But, the revenge?"

"Ha! we'll come in for that, for we'll nip things right in the bud. We'll take the two women and our gold and make off with them."

"Can't we leave the gold? It's safe, and it's no light thing to carry."

"You haven't heard the worst of it. I revealed the hiding-place of our treasure to the woman last night, in my weakness."

Wishby fairly jumped up and down in his rage, cursing Roeble for a fool.

Hasty explanations of the situation followed, and they quickly agreed that their first business was to look to the safety of their gold.

The hour was yet early, and the two set out for the gulch in which their ill-gotten treasure was hid.

Meantime, Lady Peri, having seen Roeble leave the office of the mine, had gone there in all haste as soon as Roeble had entered the hotel.

She found the door locked, but going around behind the office proceeded without delay to demolish a window.

When an opening large enough to admit her body had been made, she looked in.

Her husband was not to be seen, and a dread seized her.

Clearing away the splinters of glass, she climbed into the room and looked around. Not a sign of Deadwood Dick was there, and yet she knew he had not left there since she had seen him enter.

"Dick!" she called. "Dick!"

She listened, and heard a response!

At first she was unable to tell whence it came. She called again, and several times, and at last located it.

Lying down and placing her ear to the floor, she called yet again, and this time was satisfied.

Briefly Dick shouted his directions to her, telling her of the drop door in the floor, and asking her to get help at once.

Kate had ideas of her own about that, however. She knew that it would be fatal to let Roeble learn that she was there, as he would learn if she left the office then.

She looked around, and hope leaped high in her breast.

In one corner were a lot of tools, ropes, etc., and among the rest an ax.

This she took up, and first examining her

weapons to see that they were in order, looked for the trap door.

While she looked a something like the end of a loose bolt, near the end of the desk, caught her eye, and without any especial design she tapped it with the ax.

What was her surprise when the floor opened at her feet!

She had touched the spring that worked the trap, and, as the door dropped, she sprung back a step in affright.

Only a moment was she idle, however, for she well knew that everything depended upon her haste and carefulness in the rescue of her husband.

"Are you all right, Dick?" she called down.

"Yes; so far as whole bones are concerned," was the response.

"Hold fast, then, and I'll have a rope down to you in a moment. We'll trap them yet."

The brave little woman sprung to her task with a will.

Taking up one of the ropes, she made one end of it secure around a beam that was within reach, and the other end let drop into the opening in the floor.

Her fear was that it was not long enough, but it reached the water, and in a moment more Dick had grasped it.

"Will it bear me?" he asked.

"Yes; have no fear of that," Kate responded.

Hand over hand Dick climbed up, and in a few moments was safely out.

"Brave little wife!" he cried, grasping Kate's hands. "This one case is your own, from beginning to end. I have had nothing to do with it. I'm only a passenger this time, sure."

She responded, but there was little time for idleness then.

"What will you do now?" Kate asked.

"Get the drop on those fellows as soon as possible," was the grim reply. "Do you know where they are?"

"Roeble went to the hotel, and I came here immediately afterward."

"As I knew you would. Well, come on, and have your weapons ready."

They had to leave the office in the same way in which Kate had got in, but there was no delay in that.

Straight to the Whip-poor-will they went, and Dick led the way into the bar-room, weapons in hand.

"Where is Bud Roeble?" he demanded of the astonished man at the bar.

"Him an' Wishby jest went out," was the answer.

"Know where they went?"

"They was b'ilin' mad, an' I heard em talk about some gulch."

Dick had to smile.

"I have an idea they will be madder yet, when they return," he remarked.

He and his brave life "pard" went to their room, and when, a few minutes later, Dick reappeared he was in his native habiliments.

The change in his appearance was so great that no one would have recognized him, at a glance, as the same man who had been known to them as "His Buttons."

And Kate, too, came forth in more sober attire.

In the mean time Roeble and Wishby had reached the gulch where their treasure was supposed to be, and had made the discovery that it was gone!

It were useless to attempt to describe what their rage was. They raved frantically, execrating each other and their luck in the same breath. They had been tricked again.

"What is going to be done?" cried Wishby.

"Revenge!" was the vicious response.

"Then let us be about it. It is early as yet, and the discovery has not been made at the camp that Buttons has gone."

"I'll fix Buttons, curse him! If he is alive when I get back to the office, he won't be alive long. I'll shoot him and let him rot in that hole where he is trapped."

Back they started, in mad haste, and ere long were at the office.

Roeble opened the door and stepped within, and the instant he did so an exclamation escaped him.

There were the open trap door, the rope, the wet floor—evidence plain enough of what had taken place.

"Gone!"

"How could he get out?" questioned Wishby.

"Why, his wife has helped him, of course!" declared Roeble, guessing the fact.

"And the best thing we can do, then, is to shake the dust of this camp from our boots as soon as possible."

"Never! I'll not leave till I have the revenge I want! This accursed detective shall feel the weight of my hatred before I go. I fear him not, armed as I am."

"You had better think twice about that."

"I have made up my mind. Come on!"

"Stay; hadn't we better get away while we can, and come back for our fair deceivers later on?"

"No!" cried Roeble; "we'll fight it out now. If we can only lay out Old Walsy and Deadwood Dick, we'll have the women in spite of them, and there may be a chance of our getting back the gold, too."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GENERAL WIND-UP.

LOOKING to their weapons, they left the office and went direct to the hotel.

By this time men were beginning to arrive at the mine to begin the work of the day, and a foreman stopped Roeble.

"Shall we go ahead with the work, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, go right on," was the short answer. "I'll be back soon."

"Hadn't we better get out our horses, the first thing we do?" suggested Ferd Wishby.

"I don't know but you're right," agreed Roeble. "We'll do that, and have them ready in case we need them."

So, stopping at the steps of the hotel, they turned and went to the stables and got their horses out, leading them to the side of the building that was little visited.

As they came out again into sight they saw Mr. Walsingham going off in the direction of the mine.

"He's early, confound him!" grated Roeble.

"Means to see everything that is going on," added Wishby.

"Well, he's welcome to. He won't see much of me, that's sure."

"Hah!" suddenly exclaimed Wishby, stopping. "This is just my opportunity."

"Your opportunity for what?" asked Roeble.

"To get away with the girl."

"How will you do it?"

"I'm going to her room and tell her the old man has sent for her. When she comes out I'll nab her, clap a hand over her mouth and carry her out the rear way and be off with her."

"Can you do it?"

"I'd like to see any one hinder me."

"But, you don't want to forget that we have Deadwood Dick to buck against."

"I'm going to let you deal with him. Shoot him at sight. You can say you did it in self-defense, and the boys will clear you for it quick enough."

"Just the ideal! I'll do that; and then I'll have his charming widow, or know the reason. Come on."

"No; I'll go this way. If I need help I can get it."

They parted company, Roeble passing around to the front, while Wishby entered the house by a rear way.

As Wishby entered, he met a villainous-looking fellow in the hall, and stopping him, said:

"You stay here a minute, Mose; I may want your help."

"All-right, boss," was the ready response.

Wishby went on and up the stairs, and knocked at the door of the room occupied by Miss Walsingham.

She was up, and had just completed her morning toilet, and was about to leave the room.

The door was opened at once, and at sight of Wishby a dark look came upon her face.

"Your pardon," he spoke, coldly enough, "but your father desires you to hasten down. He wants to see you."

"Has something happened to him?" the girl asked, in alarm.

"Nothing serious," was the response.

The young woman came out in haste, and was half-running toward the stairs, when Wishby sprung after her.

As the villainous landlord moved, however, he was astonished to find that he ran his face against the cold muzzle of a revolver!

Consumptive Chet, the Cadaver, had placed his frail body in the way, and the proprietor of the hotel came to a sudden stop.

"What in Hades do you mean?" he cried.

"I mean shoot, if you budge an inch," was the retort. "I overheard your little scheme, and it is nipped in the bud. I'm a weakling, I know, but there's no consumption about this revolver in my fist."

The young lady had stopped in amazement.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"It was a plot to carry you off," the Cadaver answered.

"Mose!" the baffled villain called.

A pair of heavy boots began to rush up from below at the call, and the rough was soon at hand.

"Secure that girl!" the proprietor ordered. "Take her out and mount a horse with her. I'll be with you in a second."

The fellow sprung to obey, but Miss Walsingham's revolver covered him and he recoiled in fear.

At the same moment another personage appeared to take part in the affair. It was none other than Kodak Kate, Deadwood Dick's better half.

"Keep them covered a moment," she cried, "and I'll fix them!"

But, at that moment, the Cadaver was seized with a fit of coughing, and was by it rendered helpless to hold Wishby covered.

With an oath, Wishby leaped forward and dealt the poor fellow a telling blow that carried him to the further end of the hall, and sprang for the stairs.

He met another glittering tube in his path, however, and it was in the hand of the dauntless Kodak Kate.

"Halt!" she cried, "or I'll kill you!"

"Never!" was the hateful hiss, as the fellow reached for a weapon.

Kate's weapon spoke, and a bullet stung the man in the fleshy part of his arm, as a warning.

"Curse you!" he hissed. "You'll pay for this!"

Before he was able to realize what she was about, however, Kate had snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

The same was done for the villainous Mose, and by that time burried feet were on the stairs, drawn by the report of the revolver and a noise in general.

At the head of the line was Deadwood Dick.

He was springing up the steps three at a time, his weapons ready.

"It's all right, Dick!" assured Kate. "I've got them safe. Have you got the other one?"

"Nobly done!" exclaimed Dick, in honest admiration. "Yes; I have got the other knave, you bet! Their little game is up, all around. Hello! who is down here?"

"Oh! it's that poor consumptive," said Kate.

"We must see to him."

There was plenty of willing hands now, and Consumptive Chet was taken tenderly up and carried into a room. He was bleeding at the lungs, and Dick saw at a glance that he was dying.

"Poor fellow!" sighed Dick. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

In broken words and weak voice the Cadaver said that he wanted to see Miss Walsingham.

The girl was told, and came in at once.

"You don't know me?" the dying man asked, feebly and brokenly.

"No; I do not know you," was the kindly response.

"I—I am—Charlie Wynne."

"Good Heavens!"

"I—I am dying, Vee. Do not think ill of me. I loved you truly—I—I—Mr. Bristol will tell you—tell you—all."

He could say no more. The blood burst forth afresh, and turning away from the terrible sight and covering her face with her hands, Verenia ran sobbing from the room.

In a few minutes Consumptive Chet was dead.

Deadwood Dick drew the sheet over him, and all went sorrowfully out and down to the bar-room, with the prisoners.

There in the bar-room was Bud Roeble, handcuffed and helpless. Dick had taken him prisoner the moment he had appeared in the room, the fellow not recognizing him until too late.

About that time Mr. Walsingham returned from the mine office, in search of Roeble, and his amazement at what he saw may be imagined. He looked from one to another in greatest surprise, as if unable to comprehend it.

"Mr. Walsingham," spoke Deadwood Dick, "let me introduce myself to you, and I will explain everything. I am he who was known as His Buttons only a little while ago. My name is Bristol, and I am a detective. These rascals are my prisoners, and I have recovered all they have stolen from the mine."

"Detective—prisoners—stolen—What do you mean, sir?"

"I will tell you all. Did you ever know a young man named Charlie Wynne?"

"Charlie Wynne! Yes, confound him, he once had the impudence to fall in love with my daughter."

"And you drove him away, unkindly enough, even though your daughter loved him well. She may make a worse match than that would have been. But, none of my business. Charlie Wynne is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes; in this house."

Mr. Walsingham paled and looked ill-at-ease.

"I—I did not know he was here," he declared.

"Only a moment ago, after this coward had struck him. He died in the defense of your daughter."

"In defense of my daughter! What are you talking about, sir? I had no idea that Charlie Wynne was here, and I cannot understand this."

"He was the poor fellow you knew as Consumptive Chet," Dick explained.

"Can it be possible!"

"Not only so, sir, but the fact. But, for my story: A little time ago I was engaged by some of the stockholders of the Ripe Pear Mine to come here and learn what was the truth of the mine's condition. I came alone at first, in disguise, and made up my mind that this man Roeble was crooked. I went away and reported, and was instructed to lay a trap and catch him. I planned accordingly, and with the help of my noble wife have accomplished that end."

"On the occasion of my first coming here I fell in with Consumptive Chet, who had heard of me, and he wanted to engage me. I could not at first take his case, but when I learned that it was right in the line I was working on, I did so. He had ascertained that you and your daughter were coming here, and he wanted me to see to it that you were not victimized, and that your daughter came to no harm. I undertook that, but by your own dealings, Mr. Walsingham, you have proven yourself a tricky fellow and I am not sorry that you dropped the hundred shares you did. You are not half the man that poor consumptive was."

"That's pretty plain talk, sir!"

"Yes; and I am a pretty plain talker, too," assured Dick. "Well, we learned that Roeble and Wishby were working together to rob the mine, and were taking the lion's share of the bullion at every clean-up, while they reported that the mine was failing. The mine was never better than it is to-day. I have recovered what they stole, as I said, and it shall be restored where it belongs. And as for them, the law will have to do with their case. That is about all there is of it, sir."

Just then a man rushed into the room with a whoop and a bound.

It was Split-nose Budge.

"What ar' this hyar that I hear?" he demanded.

"Do I larn that ther great an' only Deadwood ar' in this hyar camp? I want ter see him."

"Look at him, then," Dick invited.

The bullwhacker feasted his eyes for a moment, and then sprung forward and grasped Dick's hand.

"By ther great je-whipperty whips!" he cried, "ef this hyar ain't good fer sore eyes. An' you is ther cuss what was done up in all them 'ar buttons, eh? Waal, waal, et do beat all! An' ter think that I tackled ye— Haw! haw! haw! But, anyhow, I have had ther honor of bein' licked at your hands, pardner, an' that's happiness enough fer one mortal."

Consumptive Chet was buried. Deadwood Dick and his wife, and Mr. Walsingham and Verenia, were the mourners who followed him to the grave.

After the funeral, the clean-up at the mine was made, and with the result that gave the stock of the mine a boom at once. It had been a rank swindle in the hands of Roeble.

Roeble and Wishby were taken to the county seat, where they were incarcerated to await their trial in the regular way, and it is safe to say that they finally got all they deserved. The proof against them was not to be shaken.

Finally, Dick and his wife left the camp as they had come, on their tricycle, but not in their fanciful attire, and as they passed along on the upper trail above the camp they were wildly cheered. Split-nose Budge almost split his lungs in cheering, and kept it up till they were out of sight.

A new manager was put over the mine, of course. The camp still exists, with the mine and the diggings doing well, and is by this time a solid little town under a new name. Some of its old citizens, however, sometimes speak of it as "Teddy's Tailings," and delight in telling of the "tandem team" that once made it interesting for the evil-doers there.

THE END.

TWO REMARKABLE HEROES.

The Deadwood Dicks, Senior and Junior, are the Gentlemen.

There Have Already Been Eighty Volumes Published Relating to Their Astounding Courage, Coolness and Skill.

In only one sense of the word can it be regarded as a novel statement when the fact is here recorded that literature has given many heroes to the world, and perhaps more than one reader will have to think a moment over this remark before the subtle delicacy of its genial wit strikes home.

But it is most essentially a half dime novel statement that will be news to many when it is added that literature, if traced from the dimly distant days when Adam was a mere child down to the present day, would show but few heroes that in the eyes of boyhood would be even judged worthy of comparison with the two greatest heroes known to American literature, or, to promptly reveal them, Deadwood Dick and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

Perhaps if everything were known of his career in bookland, Robinson Crusoe would rank above any hero ever offered to the boys of the world, for Robinson made his appearance a long time ago and his adventures have been translated into pretty nearly all the languages that are printable; but while Robinson is and ever will be a worthy personage, he is, it is to be feared, most decidedly a back number in the eyes of several millions of the boys and young men of to-day.

And then, too, Robinson's reputation was made and safely anchored to leeward at a time when competition in the manufacture of heroes of juvenile literature was so slack that it is scarcely worth mentioning. Had he postponed his debut until to-day, Robinson would have had to hire a press agent, of the very objectionable type known as a hustler, and even with that assistance the odds are that he would have experienced a severe frost.

Robinson, like many other bygone characters calculated to thrill the juvenile mind, labored under the disadvantage of having only a comparatively few adventures, and he was further very heavily handicapped by having to confine his adventures within the narrow circles of probability and common sense. The modern heroes of fiction for young America, who are now as countless as the sands of the sea, and of whom the Deadwood Dicks are much the most important, are not to blame for any such confined conditions, and with the bars let down admitting them to the boundless expanse of the utterly impossible, it is but natural that their unnaturalness should bear away the palm of popularity, and such as Robinson be left far behind in the race.

Therefore the statement of the surpassing prominence of the two Deadwood Dicks having been so emphatically made, it will be as well to justify the emphasis with some facts about their history from a bookseller's point of view, before plunging into the seething vorax of their recorded lives.

Deadwood Dick made his first appearance before the public in 1877, under the auspices of Beadle & Adams, the William street publishers of popular literature for the masses, and for fourteen years he or his son has been reappearing at intervals, which were at first irregular, but they have now settled down to a basis of once in six weeks.

It was in 1885 that Deadwood Dick the elder made his final appearance after thirty-three volumes of adventure, and his son, Deadwood Dick, Jr., who had been growing up in them for many years, took up the running, and has kept it up to the tune of very nearly fifty volumes more in the six years that have passed since his remarkable father was buried.

During the fourteen years they have been on the market these stories have been sold at five cents a volume, and the circulation they have attained throughout the length and breadth of the land, has been in the aggregate something truly vast, for the entire series is kept constantly in print, and many of the early issues are now enjoying a sale of their twenty-seventh or thirtieth edition.

It can be easily believed, therefore, that the two Dicks are so firmly engrafted on the tree of popular literature for boys and young men, that their position is assured so long as their author can keep it up, and that they stand to-day head and shoulders above all rivals in the eyes of the public for which they have lived, and for which one of them has died.

American boyhood, and that is a tremendous factor in the land, now knows Deadwood Dick, Jr., a good deal better than it knows its catechism, and millions of young minds absorb the thrilling incidents of his career in his everlasting warfare against crime and his never-ending solving of impenetrable mysteries.

Millions of boys follow his stealthy footsteps as he tracks his vicious victims to their undoing, and then, when the victims are thoroughly undone, the millions wait hungrily for the next volume, which on every sixth Tuesday appears with the certainty of the Tuesday itself, and a new set of delightful thrills go thrilling away from Maine to California.

Mr. Victor, the courteous editor for Beadle and Adams, who told *The Evening Sun* what it wished to know about the history of the two Dicks, said that he had often had his attention called to what

are known as Deadwood Dick clubs, which are organizations consisting of from three to a dozen boys, who take turns in buying the Deadwood Dick novels as they appear, and reading them in rotation, so that in the case, for instance, of a club of six members, each member would be kept thoroughly informed of his pet hero's latest doings, at a cost of only five cents once in thirty-six weeks, while when nine of these economical young enthusiasts pool their issues in the same direction a nickel will serve the purpose for a whole year.

Mr. Victor, in his curious and interesting task of editing this phase of the literature of the day for one of the most extensive publishing houses in the business, has weighed the question carefully, and finds that a volume once in six weeks is just about the amount of Deadwood Dick, Jr., that his countless admirers can comfortably absorb and digest.

In England, too, this extraordinary series of eighty volumes telling of the doings of father and son has been republished for years, to the infinite delight of the boys and youths of Great Britain and the solid satisfaction of the London publishers that had the pleasure of thus getting square with America on the piracy question.

"When I received the first Deadwood Dick story," said Mr. Victor, "I was struck with the freshness of the author's style, and after toning it down a little sent it to the printers. The story made a hit and I accepted another and another until we found that the character was becoming unusually popular among our patrons.

"I kept urging the author to make the stories less terrifically forcible in the language of his rougher characters, and gradually the sulphurous nature of their dialogues became moderate enough to need but little editing, and at the same time the torrents of liquor that flowed like rivers through his earlier manuscripts, dwindled to rivulets under the influence of my appeals for less rum.

"The author urged the absolute truth of both the language and the amount of whisky-drinking that he attributed to his characters, but I begged in the interests of morality that the flow of both one and the other be curbed, and of course the stories were none the worse for his doing so.

"Deadwood Dick, himself, was also gradually reformed and changed from the outlawed terror of the law-abiding to the deadly foe of the law breakers, and when once that transformation was achieved his subsequent course in the path of virtue was an assured success.

"True, the path was a somewhat rocky, bloody and dangerous one; but no one who follows him along its various ups and downs can doubt its virtue, and from that virtue he never deviated."

The full and official list of the titles of this remarkable series would fill at least a column of *The Evening Sun*. It contains some real gems in the way of names calculated to attract the youth in search of a thrill. For instance there is Deadwood Dick's Device; or, The Sign of the Double Cross. A Wild, Strange Tale of the Leadville Mines—of Men of Steel—of Toughs and Tigers—of Road-agents, Regulators, Avengers, Adventurers, and of the Thrilling Life in the New Eldorado.

Can any one deny the comprehensiveness of that or his probable power of seducing nickels from the pockets of novel-reading boys? Then there are a number of delightfully alliterative titles, such as Deadwood Dick's Defiance, or, the Double Daggers, and Deadwood Dick's Double, or, the Ghost of Gorgon's Gulch. Peculiarly fetching, too, in their forceful effect on the small boy's pocket money must be Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whoop Up; Deadwood Dick's Dead Deal; or, Captain Crackshot, the Girl Brigand; Deadwood Dick's Death Trail; Deadwood Dick's Death Plant, and Deadwood Dick's Diamonds. In the selection of localities for his adventures Deadwood Dick, Jr., shows far more desire for variety than the old man ever did, for he has volumes that relate his remarkable doings in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, Rochester, Buffalo, San Francisco, Denver, Galveston, Leavenworth, and even at Coney Island. The titles of the younger hero's volumes show that he met with and got the better of swindlers, bunco men, counterfeitors, bank robbers, horse thieves, smugglers, pirates, stage robbers, and, indeed, pretty nearly every sort of criminal known to the police, while his father confined himself almost exclusively to rooting out the Western type of bad man. Progress has therefore, a worthy representative in Deadwood Dick the younger.

It is surely not necessary to add that in the moderate compass of a newspaper article, only the merest shadow of justice can be done to the careers of any heroes that have had such an extraordinary collection of stories as that written about them. If a month or so were given to a careful reader for the task, he might, with the assistance of a double-entry bookkeeper, tabulate the number of blood-curdling episodes that occur in the eighty volumes, together

with the exact number of persons who are shot, stabbed, hanged and removed in sundry less conventional borderland ways, such as being tossed into quicksands, burned in the tops of forest giants, fed to bears or made to try and walk on tight ropes across bottomless chasms.

The final summary would be something appalling in its gory magnitude, and would form a record of slaughter that would shame the battle of Gettysburg, but it might prove a source of entertainment to some idle person of a singularly turp mind, and so the idea is suggested here.

The variety of duels in these stories is another source of wonder to the reader, and it must be acknowledged that Mr. Wheeler has as prolific an imagination as it is possible to conceive. Every volume of the series fairly bristles with episodes of a nature that makes those related in the more ordinary 10-cent or 5-cent stories seem as mild as hotel milk, and hotel milk has been pronounced by scientists to be the mildest object in nature.

In coming face to face with the notes of a variety of episodes and adventures in the books which the writer made as he hurriedly went through the eighty volumes, and which he hoped to utilize in this article, an overpowering sense of having buckled up against the impossible rears its dread front and mocks the man who dared to face the task of doing justice to the subject.

Once or twice a flowing beaker of moxie or nerve food, has been tossed off, and with grim determination the struggle made to sift the material on hand and condense it into something like a reasonable shape.

With a heartfelt sigh the colossal task has, however, been reluctantly abandoned. There are the eighty volumes each so crowded with thrills and heart-tugs that it were madness to hope to do justice to them collectively and rank injustice to discriminate between them. The three larger pictures illustrating this article have been selected at random from eighty just as interesting, and the smaller ones are portraits of Deadwood Dick, his wife, Calamity Jane, and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

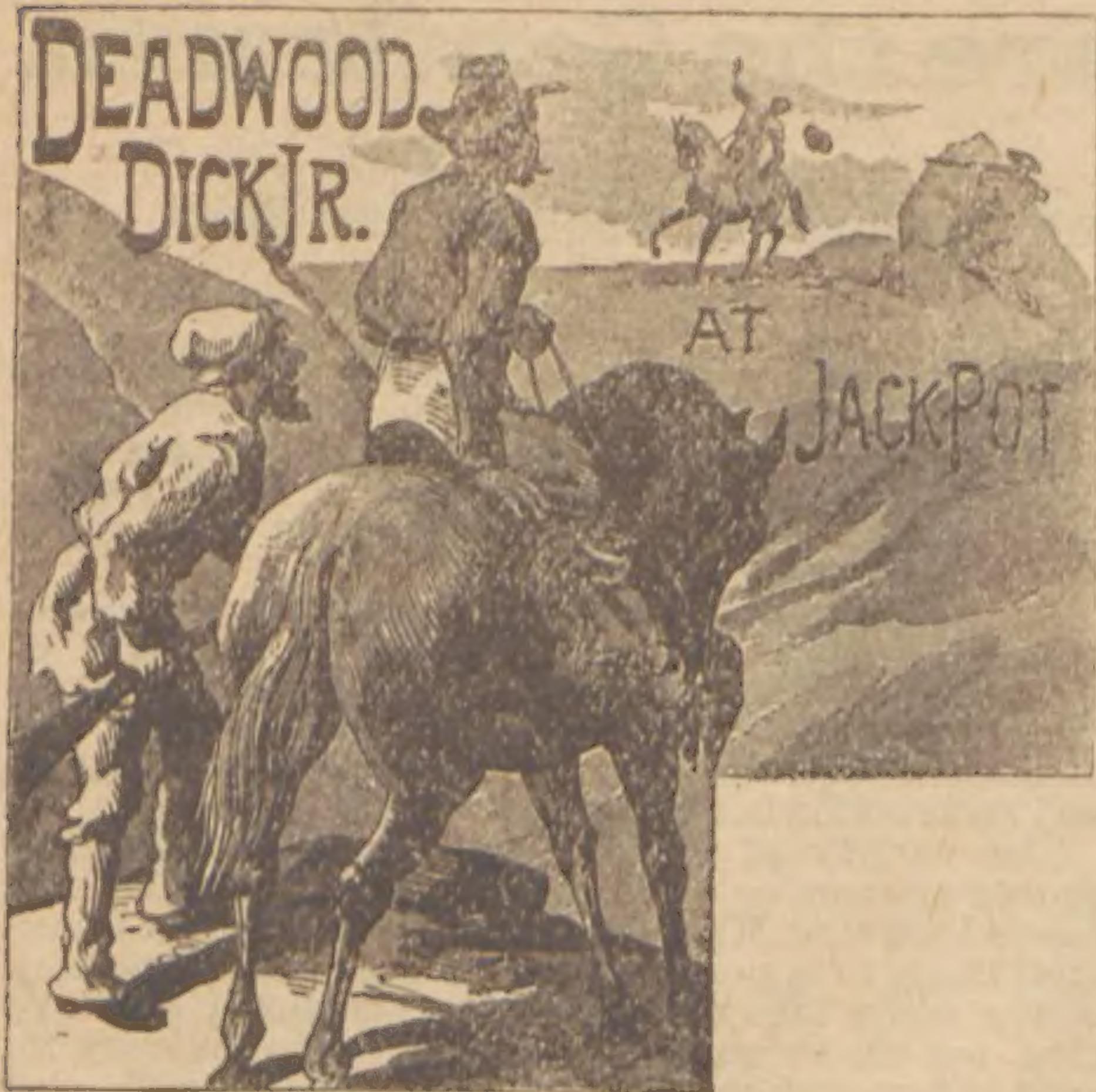
To abandon the idea of giving a few extracts from their lives causes infinite pain, but if once a start were made in that direction, it would be cruel to *The Evening Sun's* readers to stop, and it is therefore better not to relate one single adventure. Suffice it to say that the stories are clean and well written, and until the glut of gore and supernatural courage and success of the heroes becomes indigestible to the ordinary mind, there is much amusement to be found in adventures of the Deadwood Dicks.

The small boy and his larger brother have minds attuned by nature to absorb the music of the constant flow of villains' blood and the never-ceasing cracking of rifles and revolvers that keep the silence in a perpetual state of unrest throughout the Deadwood Dick series, but it is not so with a more mature mind, and unless you are a small boy or a youth prone to admire the terrifically heroic in literature, you are advised not to purchase the entire eighty volumes, but to try a sample here and there from the list. If you are a small boy, or the other fellow you doubtless know more about it than the writer, and so don't want any advice on the subject.

As a parting tribute to Mr. Wheeler, the owner of the brain that has evolved and continues to evolve the most popular boys' stories of the day, it is but fair to add, an interesting fact as well, that he has also found time to dash off some novels about Cloven Hoof, the Buffalo Demon; Bob Woolf, the Girl Dead-Shot; Death-Face, Detective; Old Avalanche; Wild Edna, the Girl Brigand; Jim Bludsoe, Jr., the Boy Phoenix; Buckhorn Bill; Gold Rifle, the Sharpshooter; Rosebud Bob; Nugget Ned; Idyl, the Girl Miner; Photograph Phil; Canada Chet; Watch-Eye; Jack Hoyle, the Young Speculator; Gilt-Edged Dick, the Sport Detective; Cinnamon Chip, the Girl Sport; Bonanza Bill; Boss Bob, the King of Bootblacks; Solid Sam, the Boy Read Agent; Captain Ferret, the New York Detective; New York Nell, the Boy-Girl Detective; Nobby Nick of Nevada; Wild Frank, the Buckskin Bravo; Fritz, the Bound Boy Detective; Snooter, the Boy Sharp; Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornado; Cyclone Kit, the Young Gladiator; Sierra Sam, the Frontier Ferret; Jumbo Joe, the Boy Patrol; Denver Doll the Detective Queen; Turk, the Boy Ferret; A No. 1, the Dashing Tell-taker; Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; Kelly, Hickey & Co., the Detectives of Philadelphia; Little Quick Shot; Kangaroo Kit, the Mysterious Miner; Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood; First-class Fred; Yreka Jim, the Gold Gatherer; Nabob Ned; Cool Kit, the King of Kids; Bicycle Ben; Wrinkles, the Night Watch Detective; High Hat Harry, the Baseball Detective; Sam Slabsides, the Beggar Boy Detective; Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives; and Santa Fe Sal, the Slasher.

He may therefore be pronounced the Storyteller from Storyteller'sville, and the Deadwood Dick stories will be his towering monument.

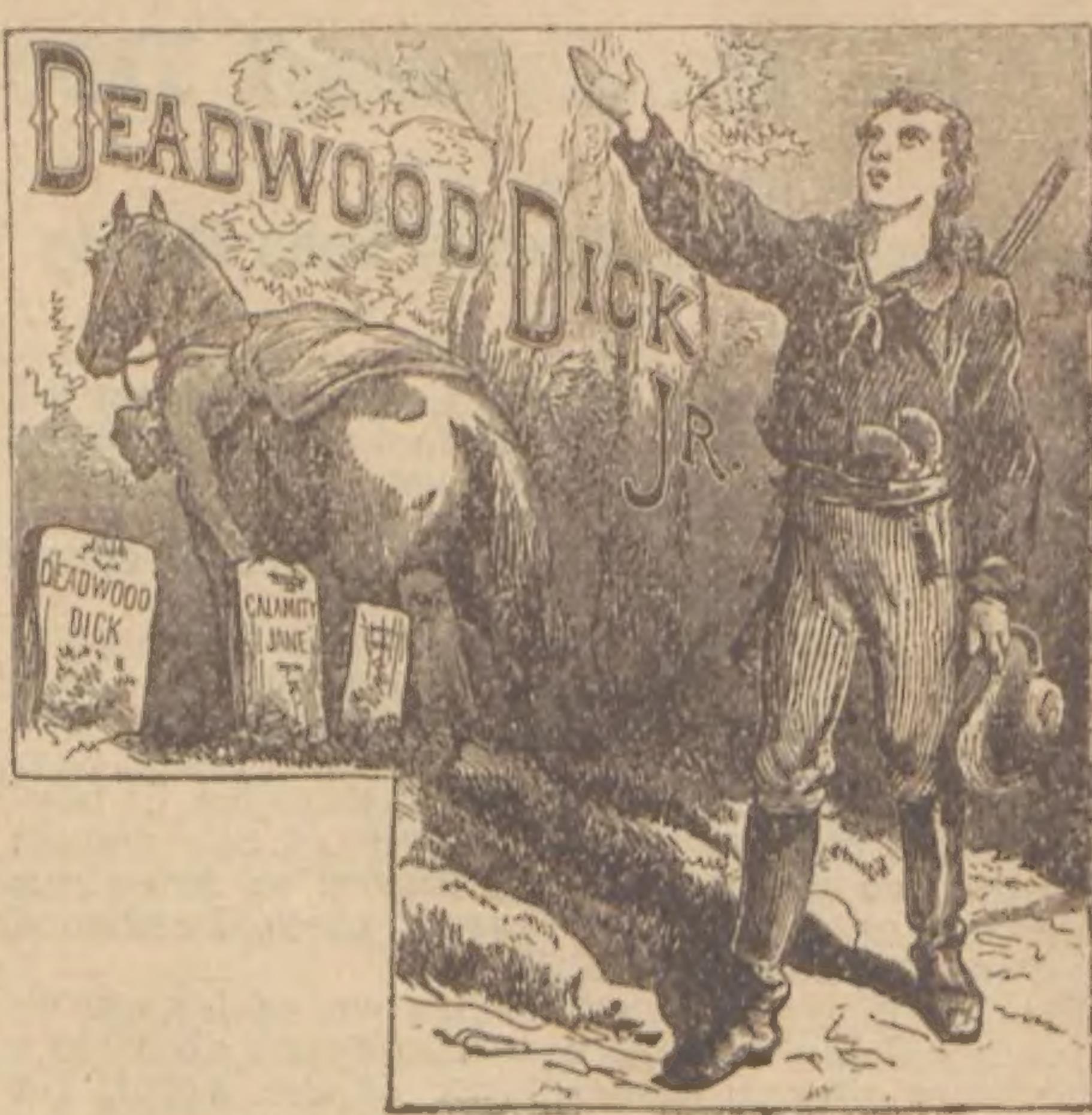
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